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THREE TIMES A MONTH

Adventure

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rdon MacCreagh
rdon Young
arles Victor Fischer
ymond S. Spears
rfax Downey
lter J. Coburn
arles P. Mueller

Complete Novel
Complete Novelettes

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SUCH POPULARITY MUST BE DESERVED

Mr Fairbanks has won immense success in many roles, Chesterfield in but one. ~ Yet the same simple maxim accounts for both—the surest way to win success is to deserve it.

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SINISTER forces on St. Luke's Island made land and sea alike dangerous for honest mariners like *John Lockwood*. His war against these forces, until the final scene on Galleon Beach, are told in a complete novelette by Farnham Bishop. "ON THE ACCOUNT" will appear in the next issue.

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***Adventure* is out on the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month**

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Adventure

August 20
1925
Vol. LIV
No. 2

HOSTAGES TO LUCK

A COMPLETE NOVEL

by Talbot Mundy

Author of "The Enemy of Rome," Tros of Samothrace," etc.

CHAPTER I

WINTER. B.C. 55. BRITAIN, NEAR LUNDEN TOWN.

"THE Greeks have a word for it," said Tros, using the fingers of both hands to part the coal-black mane of hair that reached his shoulders.

Being from Samothrace, where Greek was the spoken tongue, he seldom overlooked an opportunity to speak of Greeks as foreigners. That meant nothing to Caswallon, but it made the Roman smile.

"The Greeks call it *nous*. It means more than knowledge," he added, looking sharply at the Roman.

His amber eyes thoughtfully studied the Roman who sat, with loosely buckled breastplate and his helmet on his knees, on the butt end of an oak log facing him; but he spoke at Caswallon, as the Roman understood. It was gray twilight, snow about to fall. The shadows of the forest made Tros bulk big, like an ogre. He had nearly enough breadth, weight and bone to make two of the middle-aged centurion, but Caswallon, his white skin stained with vein-blue woad, fair-haired, muscular, was tallest of the three, not so heavy as Tros, and perhaps not so titantically strong, but more active-looking. Appearances were deceptive in that half-light. Tros looked the oldest, the Roman youngest because the

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gray over his temples did not show and he was clean-shaven. But the fact was the other way. Marcus Marius was fifty; Tros, black-bearded, hardly half his age.

"We Romans call it virtue, which is courage. The Greeks are like women, good at words," said Marius. "I have fought Greeks from the Piræus all the way north into Macedonia. I sailed with Pompey the Great against the pirates, of whom more than half were Greeks. We beat them easily, talking less, but hitting harder."

"Fight me! See if your virtue is greater than mine!" Tros suggested, his white teeth showing in a grin of great good humor.

"No," said Marius. "I may have to fight you some day. This time let us talk and see which has the better of it. If you have what the Greeks call *nous*, which is something they talk about but haven't, you will understand me easily enough."

"Talk on," said Tros, sitting down on a log to face the Roman.

Caswallon sighed. As king of that corner of Britain he had heard too much talk—as, for instance, from Fflur, the mother of his sons. He began to stride up and down within earshot, six paces this way and six the other with his hands behind him, while his blanketed chariot horses stamped impatiently, a wolfskin-clad groom squatting under their noses, twenty yards away.

Firelight shone between the tree-trunks near-by. The woods were full of the echoing din of hammer blows, the snore of rip-saws and occasional shouting in a tongue the Roman did not understand. He had to speak loud and in Gaulish because Tros had refused to have any conversation with him without witnesses, and Caswallon knew no Latin.

"I will speak first of Cæsar," said Marius, and again Tros grinned, but Caswallon began to knead his fingers nervously behind his back.

"Why?" said Tros." I know Cæsar already. So does the Lord Caswallon."

"I have heard others make that same boast," Marius answered. "Yet I, who am older than Cæsar, who have served under him in Gaul and in Spain, who have been in his household in Rome, who have travelled with him to Bythinia and back, who have lived with him in exile and have shared dry bread with him on many a campaign, am not so sure I know him. Two or three times you have had the best of him. I have heard it was you who wrecked his fleet when we invaded Britain and you who all but captured him at Seine-mouth. But were you never stung by a wasp?"

Marius picked up a stick and struck the log on which he sat, to illustrate a wasp's fate, then continued:

"Cæsar was captured by pirates once. That was long ago, near Pharmacusa, when he was hardly more than a boy. I was with him. They were a bloodthirsty pack of swine, and they demanded twenty talents ransom.* 'Not enough!' said he. And while we who were with him feared for our lives and his, he laughed at those pirates for fools who did not know Cæsar's value. 'I will give you fifty talents ransom,' said he, 'and that price will be nevertheless, too little.' †

"Thereafter, while all of his party but the two of us and one slave, who remained in the pirates' camp with him, went to raise the ransom money, Cæsar ruled those pirates as if they were his prisoners, not he theirs. He took part in their games, he made love to their women and he made them listen to his own writings that he read aloud, they wondering and he assuring them they were fools who could not appreciate a priceless privilege. When he wished to sleep he ordered them to keep silence, which they did, treading on tip-toe and striking whoever disturbed him. When the ransom money came at last—fifty talents! Think of that!—he paid it, promising he would come back soon and crucify them all.

"He was very young and they laughed, even as just now you laughed when I mentioned Cæsar's name. They knew he had no authority. He was an exile. He had no army, no fleet, not many friends. They did not even trouble themselves to move away from Pharmacusa, but sent two of the talents for precaution's sake as a present to Junius who, in those days, was governor of Asia and in a too great hurry to grow rich. But Cæsar, I with him, went to Miletus, whence the ransom had come. He had a few friends in Miletus. There he assumed authority, and there was none who saw fit to challenge it although, as I say, he was a young man and without much influence. He manned some ships that lay there, impressing freemen in the name of Sylla, who was all-powerful in Rome in those days and

* Plutarch's "Life of Cæsar." † About $20,000

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had proscribed him. He descended on those pirates as the dawn steals on the night, and caught them all, with all except two talents of the fifty he had paid them. He kept the money, but he threw the pirates into jail in Pergamus.

"Then he went to see Junius, I with him again, but Junius had already received two talents from the pirates and his appetite was keen for more, so he said he would consider at his leisure what punishment should be imposed. He was a mean Etruscan with a long nose and the kind of sneer that has cost many a man his fortune. Cæsar can sneer, but never that way. Junius asked by what authority Cæsar had taken ships and men from Miletus, and in whose name.

"So Cæsar took very courteous leave of him, answering that he would keep a promise while Junius considered at his leisure what his duty might be. And he returned to Pergamus, where he crucified every one of the pirates. He always keeps his promises. But because they had been civil to him while he was their prisoner he showed them mercy by ordering their throats cut before they were tied to the trees. Thereafter he wrote to Rome and made use of a talent or two for the hastening of the end of Junius' career. All fail, who oppose Cæsar. He would have been Junius' friend, had Junius supported him."

"You suggest I am a Junius?" asked Tros. The thought seemed to amuse him.

"No. But you might be a greater than Junius. You are a pirate*. Cæsar would have befriended those pirates had they sought his friendship and promised to desist from piracy, even as Pompey the Great befriended all the pirates who surrendered to him in his war against them. Cæsar and Pompey are great ones and great friends at present, Pompey lending men to Cæsar for his work in Gaul, each meanwhile courting the wealth of Crassus, who fears them both. But men are saying the world is hardly big enough to hold all three, Cæsar, Pompey and Crassus. The time comes soon when each of the three will be seeking every friend he can depend on and the world will split in three, if my judgment amounts to anything."

"What if I am Pompey's friend?" Tros asked. "You call me pirate. I have Pompey the Roman's written leave to sail where I please. Cæsar gainsaid that. He burned my father's ship. He beat the crew to death. My father died from torture."

"You were none of you Roman citizens," the Roman interrupted. "Rome puts no such indignity on Romans."

He held his chin high while he said that, and the firelight through the trees shone on a proud face. Rome was his religion.

"Better be Cæsar's friend and become a Roman citizen. I tell you, Cæsar can procure that honor for you."

"Pompey could have done the same," Tros answered. "I refused it. I am a lord of Samothrace."

"Bah!" said the Roman. "What is Samothrace? An island, a spot of an island in a rocky sea. The pirates plundered it. No army, no revenue, nothing."

"Nothing that you can understand. Nothing there for Cæsar!" Tros retorted. "Never was a foreign ruler there, and never will be!"

"No harbor, no houses, no commerce, not even a tree!" said the Roman, his eyes wandering among the giant oaks around him.

They were martial, appraising eyes. He appeared to be mentally figuring in terms of baulks of timber that would serve to build redoubts or batter down an enemy's.

FROM out of the trees into the clearing came a score of fair-haired Britons armed with spears and handsomely clad in furs against the wintry wind that made the Roman shiver now and then. The furs had jewelled clasps. Several carried dead wolves on their shoulders and two had a boar hung between them on a spear. They greeted Caswallon noisily, but he took scant notice of them. Then a horn blew and there began a great commotion in the gloom a hundred yards away behind Tros' back. The hammering and sawing ceased, but there was a noise of footsteps and laughter and, by the thump, it might be of tools and odds and ends being stowed in boxes for the night.

"It is cold here," said the Roman—pointedly.

He buckled up the bronze armor to his throat, but there was not much warmth in that. Wind sighed through the trees, and the great fires, glowing crimson hardly a hundred yards away, looked cheerful and inviting.

*In those days practically any sailor was a pirate who did not acknowledge Roman sea supremacy.

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Caswallon came and stood, legs apart, his back half-turned toward the Roman. He said nothing, but he met Tros' eyes and jerked his head in the direction of the firelight with an uplift of the eyebrows and a questioning smile. Tros answered the unspoken thought:

"What can one more spy do? Cæsar knows already."

He arose and led the way into the trees, Caswallon following the Roman, who strode at ease, not minding that a king should walk behind him. His armor clanked and his footfall on the frozen earth was even heavier than Tros', but Caswallon, clothed in dyed, embroidered leather moved as silently as a shadow except when his leather-stockinged feet rustled among dry leaves. Tros rolled in his gait as if a heaving deck were under him.

The path they followed led to a new-made picket fence a man's height from the ground, interwoven with willow-withes through which the firelight shone. There was a wide gateway barricaded with oak beams and deeply scored with wheel-ruts, with a log and mud guard house beside it, in the door of which stood Conops, Tros' one-eyed Greek freedman. He doffed his red cap civilly and let the bars down, but showed one yellow eye-tooth at the Roman.

"I have seen you before," said Marius, acknowledging what he chose to consider a salute.

Conops touched the lid over his sightless eye.

"Ah!" said Marius. "I remember. You forgot your manners. Cæsar punished you. Well, if you have learned the lesson you will be a greater comfort to your master and less dangerous to yourself."

He passed on because Tros beckoned and Caswallon crowded at his heels. Conops raised the bars again, his tooth still showing through the slit in his upper lip. Before them a low, thatched building, lighted from within, loomed shadowy in the bonfire light, and beyond that the roofs of other, longer buildings set in rows, noisy with voices and song. In the gloom to the right by the gurgling river's edge arose the ribs of three ships, two of them a good size, one tremendous, looking like the black bones of a deep-sea monster beached and picked clean by the birds. The scaffolding erected around all three resembled giant rushes, through which the wind moaned lonesomely.

Tros led the way toward the nearest house, and the door opened before they reached it, Helma, golden-haired and smiling, standing framed in the glow from the hearth.

"My wife," said Tros, and introduced the Roman, who bowed, inspecting her curiously. She answered stare for stare, having heard no good word of the Romans, from Tros at any rate. Her blue eyes challenged his indignantly, until Caswallon laughed, bending his head to get through the door, which was high enough for Tros or any ordinary man.

"She is Norse," he warned. "The Norse are fighters, and the women are the mothers of the men. Look out for her!"

A British slave-girl knelt beside the hearth, turning and basting a huge spitted roast. There was a smell of well-done meat and warming mead that made the Roman smack his lips and set Caswallon whistling, but Tros led the way through a door at the far end, shouting for light, which the slave-girl brought. He lighted three lanterns from the first one, and then kicked the door shut behind Caswallon, who stood looking bored as if he had seen this sight too many times. But the Roman's dark eyes stared appraisingly.

The room was a museum of new wonders. On a table twice a man's length, in the midst, was the model of a ship such as no Roman nor any other living man had seen. She had three masts, three banks of oars and lines so lovely that even the Roman gasped at them. The sails were purple, as were the oar-blades; the top-sides were vermilion; the bottom gleamed like polished silver. She was nearly the same shape end for end, except for a flare from bow to waterline. She was all decked over, and along each side of her were painted shields, each bearing a golden dragon on a purple ground. Near where the break came at the bow and poop were four sets of double uprights, each with a wheel at the top between them. They resembled cranes, but their purpose was explained by models set against the end wall of the room.

"Catapults!" said the Roman, his eyes ablaze with interest. He was an expert in artillery.

"Aye, but better than any Cæsar has!"

Tros was prouder of that model than a mother of her child. It represented ten years' thinking, all his hopes, and three

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months' whittling with a knife. The Roman wanted to examine the working model of the catapult, but Tros prevented him.

"Nor shall you see inside this!" he remarked, and rolled a leaden ball across the floor. But the ball sounded hollow and the Roman noticed it.

"Neither heavy nor hard enough," he said with the air of long experience, and began examining the ship again. Tros considered he had seen enough, took his elbow and led toward the door.

"They tell me Cæsar likes scent," he said, as if revealing confidences. "That lead ball shall hold a nosegay to remind him of the Roman housewives dumping ordure from the house-tops at election time. I am told he has had experience of that!"

He led the way into the the outer room, Caswallon following, and the Roman faced him when he shut the door.

"Cæsar is a man of full experience," he said. "There is nothing new that you can show him, Tros. He has eaten crusts and he has worn the purple. Rome spewed him forth. Rome fears him. Rome shall worship him."

"I have heard that Cato, who is a very noble Roman, speaks of him as 'that woman'!" said Tros.

"Aye, and Cato will live to rue it!"

Marius, resenting Tros' grin, strode along the room to where Helma had set three chairs together at an angle near the fire. He sat in one of them, then rose and bowed to Caswallon to be seated first. Caswallon laughed, accepting mead from Helma in a silver tankard that had once been Cæsar's, with his left arm elbowing the Roman back into the chair.

"Wisdom to Cæsar!" he said, drinking deep. "If he knew what trouble kinging it can be, he might let well alone. Gods give him, what was that word, Tros? Gods give him *nous*, whatever that means.!"

"Virtue," said the Roman. "Cæsar has ten men's share!"

TROS passed mead to Marius, but did not drink with him. The three sat down, the firelight in their faces, and there was a long pause while they watched the sizzling meat, and sniffed and eyed each other sidewise, Helma laying platters on the table, studying the Roman all the while as if her blue eyes could burn holes in him. Caswallon was the first to speak again, setting his tankard bottom upward on the floor by way of hint to Helma:

"Now, Tros, out with it! This Roman comes with a message of peace from Cæsar. He says Cæsar prefers to be friendly."

"Let him leave you alone then," Tros retorted. "Was he friendly to the Gauls? To the Belgæ? To the Germans? *He* said so, but did they? Was he friendly when he landed on the Kentish beach and slew half-a-thousand Britons? Bid him prove you his friendship by coming no nearer than Gaul!"

Caswallon nodded, stroking his long moustache. "But he says the Romans want to trade with us. My men are eager for trade. They call me a snail of a king, with a shell that I crawl into when anything new wants to happen. This man Marius has been quite frank. He says Cæsar's hands are full enough already, so that he doesn't want another war but does want popularity in Rome. He says that if Cæsar can open up trade with us Britons, that will improve his political chances because the rulers of Rome think of nothing but money."

"Whereas you Britons think of nothing but horses and hunting!" Tros answered. "You are far too hospitable, and you think other people are like you. You fight the Northmen one day and make friends with them the next, and that may work with Northmen, but it won't work, I tell you, with Romans. Trade? Aye, if plundering is trading! Rome gives nothing, and takes all. She plants her eagles, and around them a colony of soldiers from some other conquered land, who take for themselves what they think they need and send the rest to Rome. Trade? Tribute! I tell you, Rome is a monster that is eating up the world—vicious, stupid, proud, cruel. She has but one virtue."

"Name it," said Caswallon.

Tros eyed the Roman, studying him a full minute before he spoke.

"She can breed and train men like this one. This centurion and his fellows are all the virtue and all the strength that Rome has. They are true to Rome. They lie for Rome, and die for her. They believe in Rome. They are Rome! The rest is moneylenders and a rabble. If you, or any of your men believed in Britain and were as loyal to her as this centurion is to the

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seething cesspool that he is helping to poison the earth, you would be a power instead of all at odds and at the mercy of the first invader."

The Roman and Caswallon grinned, each at the other and at Tros. They were both men who enjoyed plain speaking.

"You are using this man's argument," Caswallon said, swallowing mead again. "Marius says that Cæsar will undertake to guarantee my kingdom, and to make all the other tribes submit to me."

"In return for what?" Tros asked.

"In return for a few trading posts, my friendship and permission for a Roman official to reside in Britain."

"Alone?"

"No," said Marius. "Roman officials abroad have to have a body guard of Romans to support their dignity."

Tros laughed aloud, with scorn that made the Roman glance at him.

"Caswallon, that is Rome's way. First a messenger, like this one, honest as the day is long, believing every word he says. Then a trader or two. Then an envoy. Then a resident official and his bodyguard, which grows. Then a little irritation, woman trouble maybe, and a few stones thrown into the residency. Rome protects her man. More troops. Resentment. Riots. War. A puppet king imposed in place of the offending one. Tribute. Rebellion. Drastic punishment. A colony of time-expired foreign soldiers and a Roman governor. Peace, if you call it peace to be obedient and pay the taxes that support the Roman mob! As I sit here and lie not, I have warned you."

"Tros, you are a fool," said Marius without heat. "You will defy Rome when you might reap her rewards. Your reward would be greater than mine, and at less price. I am a Roman born. I have fought her wars and trod her dusty roads all ways across the world and back again. I have sweated, bled and starved for her. And I am fifty years old. All I am is a centurion. How old are you? Not half my age. How much have you starved and bled and sweated? Yet you can become a Roman and command a fleet by simply giving your allegiance to Cæsar!"

"I admire Cæsar. I despise him. I fear him because of his power, which I am too fearless to submit to. I loathe him, and I believe he is the ablest man who ever called himself a Roman. Do you understand me?" Tros asked.

"No," said Marius.

"Then you will never understand me," Tros retorted. "Let us be friends until tomorrow. Let us eat together."

"Not yet," said Marius. "My message first. I am a Roman."

He set down the helmet he had been holding between his knees, loosened his sword-belt and undid the buckle at his throat.

"I love Cæsar," he said, almost grimly. "Yet I do not expect too much of him. It is what I can do for Cæsar that is important, not what he can do for me. If I can bring you over to him and persuade Caswallon, my reward will be that I have well served Cæsar."

Tros grinned and nudged Caswallon. "Did I not say Rome can breed centurions?"

"Cæsar," Marius went on, "is no mean man, whatever else you think of him. He can forgive his enemies. You seized his bireme and his treasure."

"Aye," Tros interrupted, "and I pick the bireme's bones to build a finer ship. I use the treasure to pay the builders."

"Cæsar knows that," said the Roman. "You are not first man who made plans against him. Two-thirds of his army are men who were in arms against Cæsar not long ago. Those who fought against him hardest, he admires most, and it is they who are the most loyal. Tros, you have done Cæsar more damage than all the Britons did when they opposed him on the beach. You can be his best friend. Why not?"

"Because I do not wish to be," Tros answered. "I am a free man."

"I, too," said Marius. "I am a Roman citizen."

"That is no honor in my eyes," Tros retorted, "for I know Rome. She is a thief that camps on seven hills, selling what she calls her peace to the highest bidder. The mob that is her master sells its votes. Her senators buy prætorships and consulates. She swarms with all the riff-raff of the earth. Her statesmen are all moneylenders and her judges merchants, auctioning privilege in the name of justice. She has no beauty of her own, no art but what was filched from Greece, no honor. Only pride and greed."

"Cæsar will change all that," said Marius. "He needs brave men, of such ability as yours, Tros, to support him when the day comes that he strikes. For he will purge

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Rome when he has made Gaul safe. Now you are Caswallon's friend, and he is under the thumb of his wife, Fflur. You tell him honestly whether you think he can resist Cæsar if Cæsar should declare war on him in the name of the Senate and the Roman people."

"I have told him," Tros answered, watching Caswallon's face.

But Caswallon was watching the meat on the spit.

"I agree with Fflur," said Tros. "I have offered to help him resist Cæsar."

Caswallon came suddenly out of his reverie and slapped his thigh so hard that Helma jumped and the slave-girl smashed a dish.

"Ludd's blood!" He looked hard at the Roman. "You invite me to become the ward of Cæsar. Let us put it this way. I invite you, Marius, to become my henchman! I am a king. Cæsar is no king."

"He will be," said Marius darkly. "Kings kiss his hand."

"I am a king who neither does nor will do that," Caswallon answered. "Will you be my subject?"

"No," said Marius.

"Nor I Cæsar's, nor Rome's! You say you love Cæsar. I have no respect for him. He sends you to speak me fair, but behind your back he sends a swarm of spies who lie to my men, set my counsellors against me, bribe brother kings to accuse me and, Tros says, some Romans call Cæsar a woman. Is that true?"

"He is the greatest man who ever lived," said Marius. "He is a greater than Alexander of Macedon."

"I never heard of Alexander. Where is Macedon? No matter," said Caswallon. "This is my answer to Cæsar. Let him fight me for my realm. Me, hand-to-hand. There is an island about midway between my shore and his. I will meet him there, if he is man enough, and we will have it out with swords or any other weapon that he pleases. That is the way we Britons settle arguments. Now let us eat."

He got up and strode to the table, sitting there and rapping on it with his dagger-hilt to make the slave-girl hurry. Marius shrugged his shoulders, unbuckled his bronze armor, laid it in a corner and sat at the table beside Tros, looking ill at ease on the unbacked bench. The Romans liked to sprawl at mealtime.

"I will not take that answer," he said calmly. "We Romans are not so easily put off with words. Not that Cæsar could not defeat you easily with any weapon," he added, breaking bread and dipping it in the gravy Helma set before him.

He refused the meat, and hardly tried to conceal disgust at the enormous slices that Caswallon ate.

CHAPTER II

THE GIST OF SKELL'S ARGUMENT

CASWALLON took the Roman away when the meal was finished, to be entertained in the great house on Ludd's Hill, Lunden Town, a few miles distant. The Britons were nothing if not hospitable; friend or enemy, it was all one while the feasting lasted. They galloped away in Caswallon's chariot in a whirl of snow, the Roman draped in a horse-blanket and Caswallon making the woods ring with shouts to the plunging team.

Tros watched the bars set back in place, gave orders for the night to Conops and strode away alone to where great bonfires burned in front of a vastly longer building than the one he occupied. Helma watched him through the door and followed, half-smothered in a blanket of British wool. But Tros did not know that. The fires sizzled as the snow-flakes damped them and the wind blew in biting gusts, howling under eaves and through the picket fence. It was British weather—raw, dark, melancholy.

"Not fit for a dog!" Tros muttered, glad for that once he was not at sea, flailing his arms across his breast to warm himself.

"Skell!" he shouted. "Skell! Where in Hades are you?"

The door of the long building opened and Skell stood in the opening with the warm light behind him, dressed in British trousers with a long leather smock to his knees. But he did not look like a Briton, any more than Tros did.

"No lies now!" Tros greeted him. "Your beard's dry. You've skulked indoors all evening."

Skell came forward, leaving the door open, pulling a leather hood over his head. Within there was a babel of men's voices. Someone roared to him in Norse to shut the door, and a moment later it slammed like a thunderclap, leaving Tros and Skell in darkness.

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"What sense watching on a night like this?" Skell asked. "Who would venture out?"

"Am I out or in?" Tros growled. "Didn't I tell you to patrol the yard?"

Skell kept silence, shrugging himself against the bitter wind, facing the same way that Tros did, toward where the scaffolding rose gaunt against the close horizon. Neither of them saw the door open again softly, nor heard it close, because the wind howled.

"Here I have nearly ten score war prisoners, surrendered rebels and prison scrapings. Because you are a natural born snooper, I set you to watch them. Do you know what obedience means?"

Skell laughed. It was a mean snicker, like a jackal's.

"No more than I will they desert or play tricks," he said, stamping his feet to keep warm. "They're well enough treated and know when they're well off. Do they want to return to the prison? Do they want to be outlawed and hunted like wolves? Who would feed them, if you don't? Go and count them. They're all there."

"Have I ever threatened you?" Tros asked him.

"Not since Caswallon turned me over to you. No need, Tros. I'm grateful. Caswallon would have killed me if it hadn't been for you. I'll serve you faithfully. I'm sorry I went in out of the snow. I'll——"

"Listen! Look!" said Tros and shook a fist like a club under his nose. "I can't watch all the time, and you, you dog, have nothing else to do! Next time I catch you skulking or neglecting to obey my orders I will take you by the neck and beat your brains out against the nearest balk of timber! Do you believe me?"

"Yes. I'm sorry, Tros. I'll——"

"Get your bearskin. Patrol until midnight. Bring me word at once of anything that happens."

Skell slunk off looking licked, and Tros watched him until his back was lost like a shadow in the gloom beyond the bonfire light.

"Zeus guide and govern me!" he muttered. "I will have to kill a man before long unless I can find some better way. That Skell has been up to mischief. Nobody trusts him. Nobody likes him. What then was he doing in the Northmen's hut?"

He opened the door and strode into the long, low building. There was instant silence as he slammed the door shut behind him. Two long rows of Northmen, seated on benches at a rough board table, turned their heads to stare and a red-bearded giant at the table-end stood up to greet him. Beside the blazing hearth sat Helma, still hooded in the blanket, warming her feet at the fire.

"Sigurdsen!" said Tros, and the giant strode to meet him, pulling down the leather sleeves over his bare arms.

Sigurdsen had been a chief in his own right until Tros captured him, so he remembered manners. The others sprawled over the table nearly naked to the waist and went on talking. They had a section of a ship drawn on the table in charcoal, and were studying it in the fitful firelight and with the aid of a great ship's lantern that hung overhead.

Tros led Sigurdsen toward the fire and sat down on a stool facing Helma, but he took no notice of her and she did not speak. Sigurdsen sat on a hewn log with his back against the wall, arms folded. He looked vaguely quarrelsome, alert for an excuse to start an argument, and rather sullen meanwhile.

"What was Skell saying?" Tros asked him.

Sigurdsen scratched at the back of his head, as he always did before trying to speak Gaulish, all the speech they had in common. He had been trying to learn it ever since Tros took him prisoner and set him free on condition of freeman's service, but he was slower than most Northmen at the trick of thinking in an alien tongue.

"Never mind what Skell said," Helma interrupted, throwing off the blanket. "I am your wife. Listen to me."

Tros understood her well enough. Her nineteen-year-old womanhood was up in arms in loyalty to himself. He might have enslaved her when he took the Northmen. As his wife she was grateful and proud. But she was Norse; the blood of sea kings coursed in her, and now that she was married no man might deprive her of her rights. One right was to speak her mind to him. He made a wry face, smiled at himself and submitted.

"Lord Tros," she said, "who is that Roman?"

"Cæsar's man."

"He bids for your friendship?"

Tros nodded.

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"You heard us," he answered. "You heard my speech, you heard Caswallon's message that he sent to Cæsar."

"Aye, and I heard the Roman refuse to take the message," she retorted. "Now these fools—" she glared at her brother Sigurdsen and at the forty men who pawed the charcoal marks on the table-top—"talk of forcing you to join Cæsar's fleet."

TROS stood up suddenly, arms behind him, legs apart, his eyes on Sigurdsen. The Northman shook Helma's shoulder, growling angry streams of words that meant nothing to Tros, but he was aware that the other Northmen listened to them and were much too ostentatiously not listening. They pored over the drawing on the table like a lot of scullions sorting dry peas.

"Sigurdsen says—" Helma watched Tros' face as if all destiny depended on his mood, as in fact it did as far as she and her countrymen were concerned—"we are homeless, you and all of us. He says you are the chief, having conquered him, but now we are one great family. What profits one, must profit all, and a danger to one, is a danger to all. We build a great ship, and you are to command her. But he asks, how shall we keep the sea in that great ship, if the Romans close all ports against us and if the Roman fleets pursue us like hounds after a hare?"

"So that is the gist of Skell's argument!" said Tros, his arms akimbo. "No Northman ever heard of Romans until Skell came in out of the wet!" It would have gone hard with Skell if he had chanced into the room that minute. But Helma was not afraid.

"Lord Tros, that is not true," she retorted. "We are Vikings. Our ships sailed to Utica six generations back. There is a stone by my father's hearth in Viborg that came from Carthage. We know who Romans are. I fear and hate them because you do, and I know you are right to hate them for what Cæsar did to your father and to you and to all the crew of that ship you sailed from Samothrace. But Sigurdsen says——"

"You mean Skell says!" Tros broke in scornfully.

"Sigurdsen says, we build a great ship. And how shall we trade? How shall we earn a profit or have food, unless the Romans are our friends. Sigurdsen says these Britons are no friends to count on, and they have no trade-goods fit to load into a ship. Moreover, he says Glendwyr and those other British rebels that Caswallon handed over to you to man the oar-benches are useless. They can neither use the adze nor are they sailors. They will all be seasick, and they can never be trusted in a British harbor, but will run away and leave you."

Tros showed his teeth. That kind of talk exasperated him beyond the power of speech, as Helma well knew. She was beginning to know Tros, woman fashion, from the inside. She continued:

"Sigurdsen says it is the Norse custom, that when one builds a ship he shall command her while she is at sea. While out of sight of the home port his word is law. But before the ship is launched, before they set sail, there are many conferences between him and the friends who have helped him build the ship, who are to sail with him and obey him. They agree as to the destination and the cargo and many other things."

Tros swore under his breath. He had given Sigurdsen his freedom and had no right to treat him as a slave, nor even as a prisoner of war. Besides, Sigurdsen knew ships and how to build them. Without his skillful aid there would be no hope of finishing the great trireme whose frame stood half-completed on the ways.

"Sigurdsen says it is time to speak of all these things," said Helma. "He says this Roman comes offering a good prospect under Cæsar and good money. He advises you to take it. He says, 'Why build a ship unless we are to use her like wise men?'"

The Northmen at the far side of the table were standing now, those on the near side sitting with their backs to it, all of them openly, eagerly listening and ready to take part in the discussion at the first hint of encouragement.

"Ludd's blood!" Tros thundered, using the Britons' favorite oath. Even in a tantrum he was careful how he took in vain the names of his own familiar deities. "I have fought you once. Must I split your head again?"

Sigurdsen sprang to his feet. Tros strode toward him, feeling for his sword; but it wasn't there. He had forgotten that he left it at his own fireside. But Sigurdsen, too, was unarmed. The other Northmen began calling to him to protect himself, while Helma stood back against the wall pale-faced, her eyes wide with terror, yet

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determined.! It was she who had brought the issue to a head. If Tros should have the worst of it Caswallon might avenge him, but her standing among the Northmen would be gone forever. They would call her a weakling's wife. And if Tros were killed——

"Ashore or afloat I am captain. Cry out when you believe it!" Tros shouted.

He struck at Sigurdsen with his fist in the way they used the cœstus at the Olympic games, a great sledge-hammer blow that beat down the Northman's guard and sent him staggering. Sigurdsen bellowed from surprize, not pain. He had not thought Tros would try the issue so swiftly as all that. But Tros knew he had to assert and prove supremacy that instant or forevermore yield to the opinions of his men. He was an autocrat, must be one. Autocrats must fight or become mere figureheads.

He struck at Sigurdsen again amid a roar of voices from the forty at the table. Sigurdsen, swinging his fist like an ax, sprang in and rained blows at his head, his own body jerking and his breath in gasps as Tros pounded his ribs and stomach. They used fists for lack of room, Tros not daring to give ground and Sigurdsen, his back toward the wall, unable. Tros had to be swift to settle the business then and there before the other Northmen rallied to their man's aid. It had to be a downright victory, no half-won fight. He feinted, then clubbed with his fist at the Northman's ear, sending him staggering sidewise away from the wall.

There was room then for the game Tros understood. He closed, and now the Northmen did not try to interfere; their own man was a champion who could wrestle two of them at once. They yelled, roared, upset table and benches, but kept a ring clear, crowding Helma to the outside where she could not see, until she seized a firebrand and beat her way back between them to the midst.

Now was a trial of chieftainship that Northmen could appreciate. They valued cunning, but they worshipped muscle and the will to win. They had never felt that when Tros first conquered Sigurdsen in fight, sword against ax, the two had been fairly matched, because on that day Sigurdsen was weary from a battle with the Britons. The sword was longer than the ax. The deck on which they fought was slippery. There were a hundred other reasons. First of them that Sigurdsen was a bigger man than Tros, had been their chief and looked the stronger.

THEY kept the ring, at first, because it looked as if Sigurdsen must win by sheer strength, weight, reach and fury. Then, presently, Helma beat at their faces with the firebrand. Fury availed nothing against Tros' sudden shifts and desperate determination. Nine times in succession he threw the Northman crashing to the stamped earth floor, until all the breath was gone from him, his bellowing ceased and he was jarred into a state of almost helplessness.

Then, the ninth time, when Sigurdsen lay and looked at him as if walls and roof were spinning before his eyes, Tros seized him by neck and leg before he could recover and hurled him into the embers on the hearth. And that was a stroke of genius.

He rolled clear, and a Northman dowsed him with a water-bucket, but the other Northmen laughed, howled derision at him, mocked him for a fallen chief. And that gave Tros, breathless and exhausted, the one opening he would have asked for if the gods had offered him his choice that minute of all the miracles they had in store.

"You laugh?" he gasped at them. They ceased to laugh. "You dogs! You dare to laugh at my lieutenant? I will show you who laughs last!"

He turned to the hearth, deliberately chose a length of burning oak, rejecting one piece, then another, until he had a club that balanced neatly. He took time to breathe deep, giving Sigurdsen time to recover, for he judged he knew Sigurdsen, and with the corner of his eye he could see that Helma, on her knees by the fallen giant, was whispering to him, giving them time to gather into one mob and get in one another's way.

"I will show you who is captain here and who lieutenant! Dogs! Laugh, will you, at my man Sigurdsen!"

He charged suddenly, beating with the firebrand at their bearded faces, those in front retreating backward against the men behind until they were all crowded against the farther wall and there was nothing for it but to defend themselves or cry submission. Then half-a-dozen sprang at him. But that gave Sigurdsen his chance. Sigurdsen stood to lose all if Tros were conquered by any but himself. Helma had made

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that much clear to his dazed brain.

So Sigurdsen took another firebrand and came roaring to Tros' aid, beating his own blood relations right and left, helping Tros to scatter them and thrash them thoroughly in detail, Helma screaming to them all the while to get down on their knees and cry submission. There were a dozen of them down, unconscious from blows on the head, when the riot outside began. The din within was nothing to it.

The wooden walls thundered like a drum as men in the outer dark threw clods and sticks against them from three sides. Some one pounded on the door, which made Tros laugh, because the door was not locked. Mingled with the shrieking of the wind under the eaves there was a tumult of men's voices.

"Hold!"

Tros threw his hand up. The gods, it seemed the very universe was on his side that night! The Northmen rallied to him instead of to one another, rallied against a common danger.

"Sticks!" he commanded, and they ran to rake the faggots over, crying to him he should have let them keep their weapons where they ate and slept. Whereat he laughed again.

"Helma!" he commanded. She stood beside him.

"Go to that door and open it. Have speech with them."

No doubt who they were. Glendwyr, the British rebels and the sentenced prisoners whom Caswallon had spared and given to him to labor in the ship-yard and man oar-benches afterwards, were outside clamoring, eager to take the winning side, whichever that might be. If they had had weapons——

Tros motioned to Sigurdsen and half-a-dozen Northmen to stand between him and the door. He did not want it known too soon which side had won the argument. Helma opened the door, shielding her face against the blast of icy wind. But the man who entered first was Conops, ducking low and running. He blinked at the light, caught sight of Tros behind the Northmen, ran to him breathless and said hoarsely—

"Quick, master, before they burn the ship!"

"Have they started to burn it?"

"No, master. It snows and——"

"Find Skell and bring him here alive to me!" Tros answered.

Conops vanished, ducking out again into the storm. Then Glendwyr stood in the doorway, peering past Helma, young, hardly more than a boy, with the wild look in his eyes that reckless men of breeding have who foresee opportunity to rewin freedom. He looked ragged in his sheepskins. He was like a wild man.

"Have you killed him?" he asked, for he had seen Conops run, and he interpreted that to mean what he hoped it did. "Northmen! Join me! I will lead you to the woods and freedom! We will seize a town and——"

Tros stepped forward. The sight of him froze the word on the youngster's lips. He turned to shout to the men behind him, but not soon enough. Tros charged, with Sigurdsen and all the Northmen at his back, sweeping Helma to one side. They poured through the door as if the place were on fire behind them, striking right and left at shadowy Britons, who broke and ran, screened almost instantly from vision by the driving snow. Young Glendwyr struggled in Tros' grasp. Tros had him by the throat and shook him as he rolled and swayed toward the long huts that were the Britons' quarters, shook and choked him half unconscious, then dragged him, his heels leaving ruts in the snow.

The snow had put the fires out. There was no light except what came through the open door behind them, where Helma stood framed in the glow. The Northmen were quartering the darkness, calling, pursuing a few Britons who had lagged behind the rest. Sigurdsen raced through the murk to make sure the ship was all right. Then, light ahead and a stream of Britons pouring into the biggest of their own long huts.

"Fools!" Tros muttered. "Why didn't they fire the thatch?"

Fire was the one danger that he dreaded.

Glendwyr was senseless. Tros hove him over-shoulder, carried him, head and toes down, like a half-filled sack.

"Northmen!" he roared. "Northmen!"

They began to gather toward him, looming in twos and threes out of the murk. Then Sigurdsen came, floundering and slipping, to report the ship unharmed. The light vanished suddenly.

"Open that door!" Tros commanded.

Sigurdsen and two others kicked the door inward, breaking the leather hinges. Tros hove young Glendwyr in both hands and pitched him through the opening into the

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midst of his discouraged friends. Then he strode in, Sigurdsen and all the Northmen following.

It was a big room, nearly a hundred feet long, with mud and wattle walls, except in the midst of one long side, where there was a stone hearth and a section of stone wall for the fire to burn against, with a hole in the roof to let the smoke out. There was a big fire, damped by snow that blew in through the hole, and all the space under the thatch was blue with stinging smoke. The floor was a litter of blankets, sheepskins with the fleece on, wolf-skins, anything that would serve for bedding and, as in the other hut, there was a long, strong table down the midst.

The Britons backed away beyond the table, crowding at the far end of the room, where their faces, framed in the smoke and in their own long hair, scowled and gaped like bodyless fantoms. Some of them had dragged young Glendwyr with them. He was standing now, feeling his throat where Tros' fingers had wrenched it, leaning against two men, gagging and gasping, but recovering his wits.

TROS took a stick from Sigurdsen and rapped the table with it. Silence fell, in which hardly a man breathed.

"Are you all here?" he demanded. "Or are there Britons in the other huts?"

None answered. He sent a Northman to go and look. The Northman came back at the end of a couple of minutes with his scalp bleeding where some one had cracked it open with a stick.

"Sigurdsen, take ten men and bring me those Britons here!"

Sigurdsen went, taking the ten who were nearest to him. Then Helma came bringing Tros' sword and he buckled it on with the hilt well forward, but did not draw it from the sheath.

"Let the rest of us bring weapons!" said a Northman in his ear, but he brushed the man aside and did not answer. He had the armory key in the pouch under his tunic and proposed to keep it there until this fight was won.

There was nothing more said until Sigurdsen and his ten came driving thirty Britons in a herd in front of them. The newcomers protested noisily that they had had nothing to do with the riot. But Tros demanded which of them had split a Northman's scalp and, receiving no answer, seized the nearest. The man yelled denial, offering to name the culprit, but Tros shook him until his teeth chattered and then flung him toward the far end of the room. He fell on all fours and crawled the remainder of the distance.

"Down to the far end, all of you!"

They backed away, forcing themselves into the crowd. None except young Glendwyr seemed to want to be in that front rank. But he, still holding to two men for support, stood so far in front that the smoke was like a pall between those three and the others. Tros rapped at the table again, but there was no need, there was already silence.

"The next slave who strikes a freeman shall die for it!" he announced.

There was a long pause while he let that ultimatum sink in.

"Kill me now!" said Glendwyr.

He could hardly speak for the contusion of his throat.

Tros turned to look at Helma. He was curious to see what she might have to say to that request. But Helma was gone again.

"This night I will kill no man," Tros announced. "You are a slave, Glendwyr. You are all slaves. You have no right to live or die without my bidding. These Northmen are freemen. They were my prisoners of war. I set them free. You Britons were rebels against your lawful king; beaten rebels and traitors, given to me in bondage by the king you would have slain. But for me, you would have been burned alive in wicker baskets, six to a basket, tied and roasted slowly, as I am told the custom is with felons."

They could not gainsay that. He was talking in their own language truth that each man knew. They were lucky. Three good meals a day, and not such terribly hard work, although they did not like to work so regularly. Tros had not even supplied the Northmen overseers with whips. And strangely enough they did not mind having Northmen set over them. They had no sense of national hatred, although Northmen were hereditary enemies. Only Glendwyr retorted—

"Lord Tros, I am a chief's son!"

"You were!" Tros answered. "You forfeited your heritage by treason. You have

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it to win again by good faith. I hold no man irretrievably a slave. I set him free when he deserves it. The task is yours to earn freedom. The right of judgment mine."

"How long?" asked Glendwyr.

"Pluto! Is it I who stand at judgment?" Tros retorted. "Know this: I will never set one of you free as long as you rebel against me! I know what happened. Skell came, half a Northman and half Briton—false to both! To the Northmen he said, 'Bid Tros join the Romans,' hoping that would reach Caswallon's ears and make the king my enemy. To you he said, 'Tros has joined the Romans and Caswallon will slit his throat!' Then when you thought my Northmen had slain me, you feared Caswallon would fall heir to you all again and throw you into Lunden jail. So you summoned the Northmen to make common cause with you and take to the woods and be outlaws."

"Skell said you intended to sell us to the Romans for their galleys and receive trained rowers in our place," a man piped up from the smoke-cloud behind Glendwyr.

"And you fools listened to him! Well, that is no way to win freedom. Shall I put you in chains? Would you work better in fetters?"

They murmured there was no need. Only Glendwyr was silent.

"Now young Glendwyr," said Tros, "shall I flog you?"

"No," said Glendwyr.

But he did not say why not or inflect his voice at all persuasively.

Tros stroked his beard.

"I will make no bargain with you, and I will not kill you," he said, speaking slowly. "But if you do not believe I am your master, you would better have your mind changed now, for it will hurt worse later on. Come here."

Glendwyr hesitated, but one of the other Britons pushed him from behind. He came forward slowly beside the long table, leaning his hand on it to support himself, for his legs were still unsteady.

"You are a slave. I may not fight you, even if I would. Why shall I not flog you?" Tros asked.

"There is no need," Glendwyr answered. "I submit. If there were one man here who would stand with me, I would be in the woods now. But they ran, as they ran when I rebelled against Caswallon. I despise them. I submit."

"The man who despises his men always must submit," Tros answered. He turned away from him because there was a new noise outside, seeming to come from beyond the picket fence. A squeaking of wheels in the snow, the stamp and snort of winded horses and a bold voice shouting, but what the words were Tros could not hear! Then there came a crash as part of the picket fence went down before an onslaught of some kind, horses and wheels, a shout again, and a man leaped through the doorway—none less than Caswallon, fur-clad, brandishing a spear.

"How now, Tros?" he asked, laughing as he took in the situation. "Helma sent word by the slave-girl that you were in danger from your men."

"Never once!" Tros answered, but his face was bruised and flushed where Sigurdsen had hit him, and Caswallon laughed again.

Marius, the Roman, strode in, helmet and armor clanking. His was the yard-long military stride that lent dignity to any kind of turmoil. A crowd of Caswallon's young British aristocrats, heavily clothed in furs, surged through the doorway behind him.

"Why didn't you send for help sooner?" Caswallon asked. "I would have come."

"I needed none," Tros answered. "There was a question as to who is captain here. I have answered it."

"Tros," said the Roman quietly, "you should be a Roman. You are a man after our Cæsar's heart."

Then Skell came, frozen blood on his face and his hands tied, kicked along by Conops.

"Nay, master, I didn't knife him. You said 'alive,' so I used only the hilt. I found him coming forth from the Lord Caswallon's house."

"Loose him," Tros commanded, and Conops cut the thong.

"I would crucify that man," said Marius. "He came to have word with me."

"What did he say?" Tros asked.

"That for a price he can persuade your men to force you to join Cæsar. Treasonable talk. It is not our Roman custom to encourage it. It is cold. If you crucify him now he will be dead by morning."

Tros looked steadily at the Roman, drawing ten long breaths before he spoke again. Skell did not try to speak.

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"No," Tros said at last. "Tonight I will kill no man."

"You and your amber eyes. You look like a lion," said the Roman. "Are you afraid to kill?"

Tros stroked his beard. The room grew full of silence, Caswallon leaning on a spear and smiling, standing with his cloak undone and firelight gleaming on the golden buckles of his tunic.

"You are Caswallon's guest. How can I kill you?" Tros answered at last, looking straight into Marius' eyes. "If I should kill Skell, how should I learn what you have said to him? I look like a lion? You and I, Marius, have both seen lions, not only in the circuses of Rome. Skell is a jackal. Are you Cæsar's jackal?"

"I am a centurion," said Marius.

"Helma," Tros answered, speaking very slowly, "is my wife. Skell is my jackal. They are neither of them at your disposition, nor at Cæsar's."

Marius blinked but did not flinch perceptibly, although one or two Britons behind him laughed.

Caswallon fastened up his fur cloak and gave his spear to a retainer, pulling a fur hood over his head.

"Let us go," he said abruptly. "Come, Marius. Tros, you will need to mend your fence. We broke it."

Marius, following Caswallon to the door, came face to face with Helma. She was bringing Tros' bearskin overcoat. Her young eyes met the Roman's angrily. She almost spat at him. Tros laughed. In the doorway the back of Caswallon's great shoulders shook suggestively. It looked as if his hand might be over his mouth, but he made no sound.

CHAPTER III

"WHAT SHAPE IS THE EARTH?"

SOME kind of mental alchemy was brewing in the murk that night. The wind shrieked of it and the shadows seemed to be the womb of tragedy. Tros turned a dozen Britons out into the dark to mend the fence Caswallon's men had broken, Conops spurring them to haste with his knife-hilt and much blasphemy mixed of Greek, Gaulish, Norse and any other languages that came to mind.

Skell he kept with him because he wanted Skell alive, and he had small doubt that Britons or Northmen would kill him if he left him hutted up with either. Skell had betrayed Northmen, Britons and Tros alike; he should betray Marius, too, presently. Sigurdsen stayed with Tros uninvited, snorting disgust at the weather that only they really feel who were born amid gales and crave the sunshine. But Sigurdsen's motive needed no explaining; he wished to cement new confidence, having lost that of his own countrymen. His day was done unless Tros should continue to lend him countenance.

The three, Tros leading, Skell in the midst, leaned into the wind and fought their way against it to where the great ship's ribs loomed stark against the night, wind howling through them and through the scaffolding. Once in a while, when a squall from between the buildings on their right hand blew a lane down the driving snow, they could see the great crane like a gallows over all. Then darkness, and they stumbled over sawed logs, planks hidden under snow, ropes, balks of timber, all the litter of a shipyard, all the evidence of haste by men unused to systematic building.

They stood under the ways, beneath the prow at last, where the scaffolding was boarded up below and formed a shelter against the wind. The snow had filled the chinks, so it was warm there and Skell ceased shivering. Sigurdsen found a lantern and lighted it from one of the firepots stowed in a locker. Tros took it from him and walked forward underneath the ship until, two-thirds of her length toward the stern, there began to be hardly standing room under the keel. Then he laughed at something and held the lantern so that Sigurdsen could see what he did.

Shavings and small bits of dry wood had been piled into a heap that reached nearly to the keel. Snow had blown against it before the wind changed and the stuff was damp. Tros kicked away the snow. Shavings and saw-dust actually smoked down near the bottom and he stamped it out, kicking the snow back into the heap and mixing both together.

"While you plotted to rule me!" he said, holding the light close to Sigurdsen's face.

But Sigurdsen had had punishment enough. His face was bruised and his eyes were a beaten man's. Tros turned the light on Skell.

"Who did this?" he demanded.

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Skell's red-rimmed eyes grew ghastly in the dark. He licked his lips. He tried to dodge the lantern light, but Tros kept it close to his face.

"I—I did it!" he said at last.

"One little word there was between you and your death! If you had lied, that was the end of you," Tros answered. "How much did the Roman pay you?"

Again Skell trembled on the verge of lying. But the lantern betrayed every line of his face. Tros peered into his eyes. The thought of death was comfortless down there in the gusty darkness with the cold river sucking among reeds fifty or sixty feet away.

"He promised me freedom."

"And what?"

"And two sestertia."

"If what?"

"If the ship burned."

"Two thousand sesterces to burn a ship? Just to pile a heap of tinder under her? And he a Roman! Hah! What more did he demand for that price?"

"Lord Tros, I dare not say. Ask Marius."

"I remember now, I swore I will not kill a man tonight."

Skell grinned at that. He was half mad with terror; the blood-shot whites of his eyes rolled like a steer's in the shambles.

"But I will nail you by the ears to one of these posts," said Tros, "and when morning comes ——"

"Lord Tros, if I tell, will you ——"

"Nay, I make no bargains!" Tros retorted. "Dog! Swine of a —— British-Northman! Look!" He slapped the planking of the great ship overhead. "Ten years I have dreamed of this. I have fought the seas, year in and year out. Storms and worse weather than tonight's. Ships, boats, crews to break a man's heart, all to learn enough to build this beauty. I fought Cæsar for the gold to buy her timbers. I fought pirates and rebels to get men to do the work. I even spared your life, you dog, so hungered I for men to build my heart's desire. And now she is half-built—three months' labor of two hundred men and Sigurdsen—and me, burning oil by night to draw the plans, first on the task at dawn and last to leave it. Dog! You dare to try to burn my ship, and then to bargain with me? Seize him, Sigurdsen! Bring nails! He shall freeze here until morning!"

"Nay, nay!" Skell dropped on his knees, mumming with dry lips, licking them, then slobbering his fox-hued beard. "I will tell! Lord Tros, no cruelty! I did not know how great a man you are! No friends. Freedom, property all gone. What could I do but listen to the Roman? A man must hope! A man must help himself!"

"Even a slave can be a man!" Tros answered. "What did Marius demand of you?"

Skell hesitated yet, but Sigurdsen came striding through the dark with cord and two bronze nails.

"Helma!" he said, gulping, almost swallowing the word.

"How?" Tros knew the Roman was not fool enough to think he could seduce Helma or persuade her to betray himself

"I was to burn the ship. The Britons were to kill you. The Northmen would be free and masterless. Their own longship that you captured is still seaworthy. Marius was to offer them a price to man that and take him back to Gaul, taking Helma with them."

"For Cæsar?"

"So said Marius. Cæsar has never seen a daughter of the Vikings."

"Hey-yey-yey! Rome breeds centurions!" said Tros. "That Marius should have been a Greek, not a Roman! But what a loyal dog to Cæsar! What a fetch-and-carry, faithful, crafty scout of an ambassador! Ludd's blood and backbone! Skell! If you had half the grit of Marius and half young Glendwyr's spirit, I might fear you. Better for you, perhaps, that you are no more than a jackal!"

HE TURNED away a moment, pacing to and fro under the ship's keel, with his hands behind him, kicking at his sword-point as he turned.

"Marius called me a lion," he muttered to himself. "Why does a lion let jackals follow him? Why not kill them?"

But he knew why he did not intend to kill Skell. He was grateful to him. Skell had been useful, bringing disaffection to a head, providing opportunity to nip in the bud what might have grown into a serious sedition. Skell's value was gone for the moment, but men have short memories, whereas a jackal's character persists. He might need Skell again.

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"Zeus pity you!" he said, taking the lantern again from Sigurdsen and holding it close to Skell's face.

There came a blast of freezing wind that made Skell shrug himself against the oaken post on which the ship's buttock rested.

"I suppose you are here like the rest of us to try to learn to be a man. But how many lives will the learning take you? Miserable ——! I will not rob you of experience. You may yelp and gnaw bones and jackal it in my wake for a while yet. Until I mark a change in you, be Sigurdsen's fetch-and-carry man. Work him hard, Sigurdsen. Follow."

He led the way, swinging the lantern, and inspected all the lumber piles to make sure there were no more fires laid, kicking among the snowdrifts, making Skell move heavy timbers so that he might peer among the crevices. Then into the draughty sheds, stirring among the shavings and adze splinters.

Then into the locked storehouse, where the finished fittings lay in orderly confusion. Ropes—there seemed enough to make a net to hold the world in—ash oars, stout and long enough to mast a fishing boat; pegs of larchroot of a dozen sizes and by the thousand, for fastening ship's planking, bronze rivets thicker than a man's wrist; working parts, chain and pulleys, for the four great catapults, yew beams and woven horsehair strings for the twelve-flight arrow engines, arrows by the thousand, iron-barbed, of beech and goosequill, roped in bundles; paint, pitch, box-wood blocks, bronze anchors of a new design, with wooden stocks at right angles to the flukes—wealth! It represented more than wealth to Tros. It was the expression of his genius. It was the key to independence and the unknown.

Sigurdsen eyed it all miserably, valuing the weight of bronze and reckoning the labor that had cost so much in food, housing, clothing, toil of supervision. Had he owned Cæsar's treasure chest, he would have thought twice, ten times before he risked its contents on a venture on the high seas. To him, a ship was only a protection against famine, a defence against invasion, an expense, a last resource, to be built with skill and patience but reserved until a man must battle with the seas.

He was a sailor because he was a sea-king's son, because he had had to be, because the bitter seas around his northern home had been the only road to anywhere when crops failed and the long, dark winters threatened hunger. Sigurdsen would have bought land and would have built a mansion on it, if he had had Tros' money.

Whereas if Tros had had all Caswallon's wealth and all the money coined in the mint at Verulam, he would have built three, half-a-dozen ships instead of one. And the one ship that he could build, with the help of the money he had looted along with Cæsar's bireme, was to be the finest that had ever sailed the seas.

He had torn Cæsar's own bireme's planks and beams apart for the bronze in her and to learn how Roman ship-wrights built for strength; and he had improved on all their joints, proportions, fastenings. For beauty of design, seaworthiness and speed, he had turned to the Northmen's longship, captured in the Thames, copying her underwater lines, the easy entry and the almost fish-like quality of the stern, that could never be pooped, however fierce a following sea. Above all he had copied her lightness, sacrificing no strength, stiffening the bilge-line to enable his ship to carry an enormous spread of sail, and providing three masts, in which respect again he was a daring innovator.

As for rig, he had copied the lateen spar, loved of the Phœnicians, with tackles of his own invention that should make it easier to tack swiftly. All his cordage and his sail-cloth was of linen. British women were working by the whale-oil lamps that minute, weaving against time to earn the unheard of prices that he paid. Three sets of sails, and covers in which to stow them!

"Three months' work yet!" he grumbled, knowing in his heart that he would work a miracle if the last spike should be driven and the last rope bent before midsummer; but to attain the possible a man must strive for the impossible. He knew Cæsar would be building ships in Gaul all winter long, and he proposed to take to the sea ahead of him.

He knew that Cæsar was meditating a second attempt to invade Britain, although the Britons themselves, Caswallon alone possibly excepted, did not believe it. They were deceived by Cæsar's overtures for peace, and by the spies, for the most part Gauls, who threaded the country in the guise of merchants. Tros knew. He knew Cæsar. Having been well beaten at the first attempt at invasion, nothing less than

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death would prevent the ambitious Roman from trying again. He would come the next time with more legions, better preparation and a larger fleet. The one thing that Tros dreaded more than all else was that the attempt might be made in spring, before his own ship was finished, perhaps even before he could get her launched.

If he could get her into the water before Cæsar came, it might be fairly easy to conceal the mastless hull in some creek higher up the Thames, although it would be more than two hundred feet long and not easy to maneuver in the narrower reaches of the river. He did not believe that even a Roman general would be so unwise, so unseamanly, as to risk his fleet a second time on an open beach, where the first storm was sure to destroy it. Cæsar's next invasion, he felt sure, would be up the Thames estuary aimed straight at Lunden Town and Verulam.

So he had made his Northmen and his Britons toil from dawn until dark. He had hired minstrels to sing and play music to them. He had hired hunters to keep them well supplied with venison, boar meat, geese and ducks, which was cheaper, after all, than buying sheep and oxen from the landowners, who put up the price of everything their foresight told them he might need. He had even hired three fishing boats and sent that fleet to sea in winter to bring cod, sole and herring; there was a stench in the biting wind from the smokehouse near-by, and from the vats of fish oil that he had rendered down from surplus herrings. Only a man who builds a big ship knows what quantities of oil are needed!

Sheltering the lantern now under his bearskin cloak against the wind, he led toward the forges and the foundry, grinding his teeth as he thought of the trouble he had had with British blacksmiths, masters of their craft, past masters of obstruction and extortion, believing themselves keepers of the metal mystery. There were things that Tros knew about metals that they did not know, as for instance, how to melt a modicum of iron in with the bronze to strengthen it, thus helping to reduce weight. He had had to fight them to a standstill before they would admit him into the foundry shed; he had had to threaten to throw them into the molten mixture before they would consent to change the proportions of tin and copper. And then, that battle won, he had had to watch them lest they put in lead instead of iron to spite him.

But the worst had been the charcoal burners. They, too, were a guild and, like the blacksmiths, they were the descendants of swarthy tribes who lorded it in Britain long before the Trinobantes and Iceni came from some forgotten mainland. Conquered and, in a sense, submerged, they had retained their freedom, scorned by the aristocratic Britons, living in their own forest villages of mud and boughs, refusing even to trade charcoal unless they were more than usually hungry.

Yet Tros had needed and continued to need charcoal of the best, almost as much as he needed heart of oak and metal. He had tried raiding their chickens and pigs to reduce them to reason; had tried overpayment, bonuses for quality, and floggings for broken promises, but had failed until at last he found their hermit-priest, half Druid, half sorcerer, and by bribing him with smoked cod's roe and herring oil had ensured deliveries of the best stuff, kilned, of willow, not oak sticks, burned in heaps beneath a cover of wet turf.

Memory of what that had led to, of the cod roe and fish oil friendship made with old Eough, the sorcerer, restored Tros to comparative good humor. It was Eough who had shown him the cave beneath Caswallon's stables, into which the dung of generations of horses had been shovelled, Eough who had dug down to the bottom of it to where the yellowish crystals lay inches deep; Eough who had shown him how to mix those crystals with powdered sulphur, charcoal, resin and oak sawdust, until he had a fiendish concoction that would burn like the fires of the Jews' Gehenna, with a stench that no human being could endure.

It was Eough who knew where sulphur could be found in quantity, though it was rare and valuable stuff in Britain, and had promised to provide it in return for its weight in salted cod and herring oil. He had the lead balls all ready for the mixture—lacked only the sulphur now—and four prodigious catapults of his own invention that would hurl those balls with accuracy nearly half a mile.

Bouquets for Cæsar! Better than Rome's electioneering ordure poured by women from the roofs! Something that would make an enemy trireme's captain hurry to abandon ship!

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Thought of the surprize he had in store for Cæsar started him singing in the teeth of the howling gale. The song was beaten back against his face; his own ears hardly heard it, but Sigurdsen did, behind him, and began a Viking chant that out-clamored the wind and made even Skell walk like a man.

SO THEY passed by the break in the fence that Conops and the Britons had repaired, passed thence to the long huts where the Britons lay on sheepskins on the floor, and Tros surveyed them, brandishing the lantern, making sure there was no more plotting for that night at any rate, thrust Skell into a watchhouse, where he could sleep alone and pity himself to his heart's content; until at last they tramped into the Northmen's quarters, where the table was set in place again and six men slept on it, the others snoring on the benches against the wall.

Tros shook the snow off his bearskin, strode to the fire and kicked the dying embers into a blaze, By the light of that, he turned and looked straight into Sigurdsen's eyes.

"You little know what eats me," he said, speaking slowly because Sigurdsen had hard work to understand Gaulish and Tros knew no Norse. "You lost your little kingdom. I never had one. This ship will be my first. I yearn for it as Cæsar yearns to own all earth and sit in judgment with a golden crown on his bald head! I would not give that for a crown," he said, snapping his fingers. "Sigurdsen," he went on, staring harder than ever into the Northman's blue-gray eyes, "what is the shape of the earth?"

"Ask Odin. Ask the gods," said Sigurdsen, drawing his huge bulk back a little. Tros' expression made him half-afraid. "There is a rim, over which the sea pours everlastingly, and beyond that there is no air, no light, nothing; but as to what shape it is, who knows?"

"The earth is round!" said Tros. "Round like one of those leaden balls I made to fling at Cæsar!"

"Peace!" Sigurdsen exclaimed. He was scandalized. "A man should not make jests of such a matter."

"Round!" said Tros. "And I will sail around it!"

"Now you are mad!" said Sigurdsen. "I have known men made mad by a blow on the skull."

"How mad was I when I told you we could build a longship with three banks of oars?" Tros answered. "How mad was I when I gave you your liberty. You, raw-beaten, trembling with hate, as ready to kill me as to eat my salt? How mad was I when I told you of the catapults, and of the burning stink? Mad, I suppose, because I will cover the ship with tin if I can get the stuff! How many times have I lied to you since you first knew me? The world is round."

"That is easy to say. But who knows it? How do you know?" Sigurdsen demanded.

There was a half-glare in his eyes. The whites gleamed in the firelight.

"How did I know how to figure the ship's dimensions? It is part of the mystery teaching. Earth, moon, sun, stars, all of them are round, and the earth revolves around the sun."

"You lie!" said Sigurdsen breathlessly.

"If I lie," Tros said, looking hard at him again, "and if you can prove it, I will give you the ship and all that she contains!"

"Huh! Who can prove it?" Sigurdsen retorted.

"You and I. We will set forth. We will sail around the world. If we should reach that rim you speak of, where the sea goes tumbling over and there is no more air, I will give you the ship and you may sail her home again. I will give you the ship unless I can prove that the world is round by sailing all the way around. We shall see."

"No," said Sigurdsen, "we shall never see."

"How not?"

If Sigurdsen had understood the glow in Tros' amber eyes he would have been less careless how he delivered himself pledged and bound.

"Because," he answered, "the men will mutiny if they learn that we sail on such a madman's quest as that! They will never consent to start."

"Which is why I speak to you and not to them," said Tros. "This is my secret and yours, none other's. If you keep it and if you play me fair, serving faithfully as my lieutenant, and if we two together find that the world is not round, she shall be your ship!"

"She is as good as my ship now!" said Sigurdsen.

"But if you fail me in one particular, if

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you refuse me one obedience, or if you hang back, or if you seek to turn homeward before we see that rim of the world that you say is there, or if we prove the world is round by sailing all around it, then she is still my ship and you are still my man," said Tros. "Shake hands on it."

Whereat, having bound Sigurdsen by oath and by cupidity, so that he had no more doubt of him at all, Tros left him staring at the embers and returned to where Helma sat before the fire stirring warm mead against his coming.

CHAPTER IV

"THE WORLD IS ROUND!"

HELMA sponged the blood out of Tros' hair, where Sigurdsen's fists had rained blows on him, and sat down to her knitting. There was no light but the blazing hearth, and from that the howling wind blew intermittent gusts of smoke into the room, but it was no darker or draughtier than her former home beside the Baltic had been, and she was proud of Tros, which bred contentment.

She had settled down to wifehood better than he had to the husband's part. He was a disturbing man to live with, approving all the outer forms of luxury, evidenced by painted walls, dyed hangings, goose-breast feather bed and the best of everything to eat and drink, but bursting in to swallow a meal in haste and charging out again to stride among the ship-builders and watch each peg and rivet driven home. When the bronze was to be poured he stayed out all night long.

"You love that ship much better than you love me," she had said a dozen times.

He usually laughed and answered that he did not doubt it.

"Shall you change a man in three months?" he would ask her. "That ship is of my own imagining. I dreamed her. Lo, I build her. You came from the gods. I never sought you. I accepted you, because it seemed to me the gods intended that, and you are a good woman, brave and beautiful."

Whereafter, in the rare quiet moments that they had together, he would lapse into a brown study, staring at the fire, brows knitted, studying some problem of construction or contriving new ingenious ways of saving time.

But tonight he was in a new mood, at any rate new in her experience. He looked at her instead of at the fire. It seemed almost for the first time to occur to him that her hair was like spun gold, her eyes the color of lake water in the spring, her figure, neck, hands, feet, like those of a Diana that adorned a fane in Ephesus. He even remarked on it.

"No wonder Marius bribed Skell!"

She looked up sharply from her knitting.

"He tried to bribe me." She nodded, watching Tros' eyes.

"Which? Skell or Marius?"

"Marius."

Tros whistled three or four bars of a song that had its vogue along the Alexandrian waterfront, a song about the Ptolemies and women. But Helma did not know it was impolite, she rather liked the air, and she never could help smiling when Tros whistled. He did it through the gap between his square front teeth and it made all the muscles of his face move comically.

"He sent his slave," said Helma, "that Greek Bagoas who shaves him and makes his bed. That was yesterday."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"Because you are you, and I do not wish to change you, but myself, so that I may resemble you and we may understand each other. You are still, and you watch when an enemy begins to uncover his plan, until the time comes to surprize the enemy. And then you smite. So I was still. I saw that you knew part of what was going on, and I did not wish to confuse you. But I made my brother, Sigurdsen, betray what was in his mind, and so brought that part to a head. None questions now who is captain. Now, since that is settled, I will tell you about Marius."

Tros stroked his beard. He began to study his young wife all over again from the beginning. Brave he had known her to be, and beautiful, and not at all given to contradicting him, which was more convenient for her than possibly she guessed! But this was a new phase of her.

"Speak in your own good time," he said.

And that was not the way that most men treated women. One demanded to know every detail of their conversation with any other man, pretending as a rule to disbelieve every word of it, or else one ran away because they talked too much.

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"Marius sent Bagoas," Helma went on, "and Bagoas promised that if I will persuade you to join Cæsar and become a Roman citizen, Cæsar will see to it that I visit Rome under his protection. He said, I will become a great lady in Rome, because all Rome will admire my fair hair and my complexion."

"And you said?"

"I answered, I do not negotiate with slaves. I said, let Cæsar speak to the Lord Tros in person."

"Good!" Tros slapped his thigh, then laid his head against the chair-back, laughing silently. "This is a fine cycle of intrigue!" he said after a minute or two. "First, Marius invites me to become a Roman and receive the command of Cæsar's fleet, undoubtedly, although he did not say so, in order that I may lead the fleet up the Thames and rape the stronghold of my friend Caswallon.

"Next, through Skell's agency, Marius persuades my Northmen to try to compel me to become a Roman. Yet at the same time, and through the same Skell's agency, he tries to persuade my Britons to rebel against me on the very ground that I propose to sell them to the Romans. In the self-same hour he bribes Skell to burn my ship, and to take you and my Northmen to Cæsar, leaving me dead, murdered by my Britons. Later, all plans having miscarried, he proposes to have Skell crucified in a storm, so that he may freeze to death before he can reveal the plot. What do you make of it all?"

He sat back again, watching Helma's face across the zone of firelight. She counted stitches on her knitting needle before she answered.

"I make of it that Cæsar knows you are a man of valor, a stout friend or a bold enemy," she said at last. "He will either have you on his side or else destroy you. From what you have told me of Cæsar, I think he would keep faith with you if you should yield to him. And I think, that if you refuse to yield to him he will never rest until he has found some way of killing you."

Tros nodded.

"And what do you advise?" he asked.

"Be yourself, Lord Tros. It seems to me you have no ambition such as Cæsar's, and if you should yield to him you would have to be another Marius. Cæsar would use your valor and strength and cunning. He would reward you. You would grow richer than ever Marius will. But Cæsar would become your god and you his servant, furthering his aim. You have told me his aim is to bring the whold world under the Roman yoke, he ruling Rome. I am sure that you could help him better than any lieutenant he has had yet. But I would rather drown with you in freedom than wear gold and pearls on the steps of a Cæsar's throne. Nevertheless, I will do as you say."

Tros nodded, reappraising her. In the few months since she fell captive to his sword he had had no time to probe into her inner consciousness and learn of what stuff she was made. But it seemed she had studied him, and she astonished him.

"Speaking of the world," he said, "what shape is it?"

She looked up from her knitting suddenly, surprized, her blue eyes meeting his, first, as if she suspected him of trying to make fun of her, then, aware that he was in earnest.

"I would like to know," she answered.

"Zeus!"

He grinned as if she had given him new ship's stores or a new idea for building against time. He looked as pleased with her as if she were a coil of seven-ply linen rope, or a bolt of linen sail-cloth, or a ton of well-kilned willow charcoal.

"You shall know! Helma, you shall see!"

She laid the knitting on her lap and watched him, awaiting more speech, never questioning him when he was in that mood, never interrupting thought when it glowed behind his amber eyes. But at last she understood that he was studying her, not thinking of the world's shape.

"If I may see what you see," she said.

But he brushed that aside with a gesture as mere harping on the obvious. Of course she should see. She was his wife. She should sail the high seas with him.

"I wonder I never thought of that before," he exclaimed, looking at her so hard, so appraisingly that she looked down at her hands and at her dyed woollen dress to see what the matter might be.

"Were you thinking of leaving me behind?" she asked.

But he brushed that aside, too, as not worthy of discussion.

"Nay! But I had not thought how you shall go before me! Helma, one thing I have mulled over in vain until this minute, how shall the ship's bow be finished! A

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serpent there shall be, since that betokens wisdom. I have the serpent made, of coiling larch-root more than a man's thigh thick and the head carved from a great lump of yew, mouth open, all set with whale's teeth found on the sea-shore. It lies in the storehouse now, awaiting nothing but the paint and gold leaf. There is a great forked tongue of bronze, fixed on a hinge, so it will flicker like a living serpent's when the ship moves."

"Wonderful," said Helma, disappointed.

"Aye! It will make the Romans pray! But I have thought of a greater thing. Below where the serpent is to oversee the course, between the ship's bow and the waterline, a place lacks ornament. I had thought of adding three coils to the serpent, so that it might appear to rise out of the sea from under the ship's keel, but it is better to give it two tails coiling on either side the full length of the sheer strakes, joining into one tail at the stern. And now I know what I will do with the ship's stem beneath the serpent's neck. I will set your image there, blue eyes and golden hair and all! Cuchulain the Briton shall carve it out of heart of yew, and I will give him his freedom for reward if he carves it true and lifelike."

Helma smiled. That was the greatest tribute Tros had paid to her, perhaps the greatest that he could pay. But Tros laughed, long and silently.

"Why do you laugh?" she asked him.

"To think what my stern old father would have said, to see a figure of a woman on my ship's bow! He would have spoken of the Roman Genetrix, from whom Cæsar claims descent, and of the wharfs of Alexandria, and Ostia, and Massilia. However, my father is dead, I live. Helma, can you keep a secret, a tremendous secret, greater than all Cæsar's schemes?"

She nodded.

"The world is round!"

CHAPTER V

GALBA THE SICILIAN

THE fence Tros had built around his shipyard was intended less to keep his own men in than to keep intruders out. There was no risk of his Northmen straying far; they had too recently been enemies of the Britons; they would have been unsafe almost anywhere on the countryside, and though they had received their nominal freedom at Tros' hands, they had neither goods nor money and would have found it next to impossible to make a living. Where as Tros fed them royally, and they liked the work of ship-building.

His Britons, on the other hand, were slaves and, as such, outlaws if they should dare to run away. Every slave-owner and every serf above the rank of slave, nominally free but not allowed to leave the land he tilled, would be in arms against them. Their only chance, if they should desert Tros, would be to do so in a body and take to the woods, driving off cattle and plundering lonely homesteads. But it was a rebellion against Caswallon that had brought most of them to their present pass, and there was no other leader to whom they could look than young Glendwyr, already a beaten man, who had led them in the first place to disaster. Some of them, too, were mere prison scrapings, turned over to Tros to save the cost of feeding them, the shame of putting them to torture, and because he so needed men that he would accept even convicted thieves, provided the palms of their hands had not yet been branded with the hot iron to render them useless. Such men were not the sort who could become successful outlaws. They lacked the necessary loyalty to a chosen chief.

But the strongest hold Tros had over his men, much stronger, even, than the food he gave them in midwinter, was that he had made it known that service under him meant freedom sooner or later. They might rebel for an hour or two, but in the end that hope of eventual freedom brought them back to their senses. He dared to go among them unarmed for the very reason that if they should kill him, those who would not be tortured to death for it by Caswallon's men, would be sold into much worse bondage.

Delay, obstruction, interference came chiefly from without, and from two sources. First, those rebels had had women who depended on them, some unfit for service, some too young. Those clamored at the gate for food and shelter, and Tros fed them for a while, though he could ill afford it. Some he set to work at weaving and at making sails; others went to the ropewalk, where the linen cordage was twisted and tested. Some merely wailed and devoured good sustenance. They were all a nuisance. They

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all knew their men-folks' liberty was forfeited and that they must be left behind when the ship was launched and sailed away at last. To all intents and purposes their men were dead, as they would have been dead in fact—hung, burned alive, beheaded—had Tros not accepted them as Caswallon's gift.

A few at a time, the marriageable ones were absorbed into British families. A few of the older women died, mainly of misery, and some of the younger ones were taken by the Druids to be kept as virgins in the sacred sisterhood. In the end the Druids took all but a few and parcelled them out around the countryside, obliging men of means to accept them as serving-women, whether useful or not. It was the few who remained after that who gave Tros the most trouble, nine women, their own fathers toiling at the heavy labor in the yard, upsetting discipline by syren-smiling at the Northmen overseers, who were human and young and not eager to be stayed by good advice.

Legally Tros might have sold those women. They were his. Daughters of traitors, captives of Caswallon's spear, they became, foot, hand and hide, the property of the king, who had waived possession in Tros' favor, although Caswallon himself took over their homes and goods. But there was something in Tros' obstinate nature that objected to that very commonplace proceeding. He did not even like the thought of selling men. He had bought men in days gone by to man oars in his father's ship, but had never sold them; he had never bought or sold a woman, and he did not propose to begin.

He tried discussing it with Sigurdsen. But Sigurdsen said "Boys will be boys" and shrugged his shoulders. He talked it over with Helma, who chose one of them as maid and kept two alert blue eyes on her. But that left eight, and eight ownerless women can play havoc among thirty or forty homeless sailormen. He asked Caswallon's advice, but Caswallon only laughed.

"Nay, nay, Tros! I have my own task kinging it, and Ludd knows there are too many women, what with Cæsar having killed so many young men on the beach, and Glendwyr's revolt, and one thing and another. Those girls are yours. By law you have to feed them or else deed them to some one who will. Put them to use, I would, but that is your affair."

The trouble of it was, that they were not bad looking women of the swarthier, smaller type descended from tribes that inhabited Britain before the Britons came. They had the conquered disposition that takes a century or two to acquire and another century or two to overcome, a disposition to assume inferiority, social as well as moral, and to take other folks' assumption of privilege for granted. But that also implied an ingrown subtlety and an alertness to take advantage of weakness wherever they found it or believed it to exist.

Tros' generosity was weakness in their eyes. They knew the law. They had no right to expect anything but slavery. If Tros had not helped Caswallon to suppress rebellion and so become possessed of their fathers and brothers along with themselves, their normal fate would have been to be swapped to the Iceni for horses, and thereafter possibly resold to the Northmen when the tradeships began coming from the Baltic in the spring. Or if, instead of tradeships, raiding parties should come, they might have been used to bribe the pirates to go away again.

Meanwhile, in the ropewalk they were more trouble than they were worth, since they needed so much supervision. They did not lay the linen fibre properly or twist it evenly unless watched all the time, and the men capable of supervising them were needed for at least equally important work elsewhere.

The other constant source of trouble was the visitors. The Britons came in droves to watch the ship-building, and there were many of them too important to be denied admission to the yard. No aristocrat, least of all Caswallon or his immediate friends, ever moved without a train of followers. They used to ride down or drive their two-horse wicker chariots and spend the day criticizing, asking questions and getting in everybody's way.

They were great humorists. One party of them asked Tros what name he intended to bestow on his great ship when it was finished. When he refused to tell, they named it for him—the dung ship, because of Eough's explorations in the cave beneath Caswallon's stable and the barrels full of yellowish crystals that had found their way subsequently to the yard. That name offended the Northmen mightily. There was very nearly a race riot that endangered the

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lives of all the Northmen in the yard.

The spice of that jest seemed never to lose its flavor. Britons would make their grooms pick up hot horse dung and offer it as payment for admission at the gate. And when Conops, resenting about the dozenth profered offering of that kind, flung the stuff in the face of one of Caswallon's cousins, a fight ensued in which Conops used his knife, and Tros had to hand over two of his best British carpenters by way of damages.

BUT there was one man among the constant visitors who made trouble of a more perplexing sort. He was a Sicilian by the name of Galba, an attendant of Marius the Roman. Nothing could persuade Caswallon or his followers that a guest or a guest's companions might legitimately be regarded with suspicion. They said they were not spies. They were guests. Their word was taken for it, the aristocratic Britons having absurdly high-flung notions about chivalry. Marius and Galba had both eaten at Caswallon's table and were being entertained in the great house on Ludd's Hill, Lunden Town. Ranking as Caswallon's guests, Tros had tc endure both of them, he being also a guest in Britain and beholden to Cas-Wallon for facilities to build his ship.

Galba came more frequently than Marius, gave himself lesser airs than the centurion did, but observed too closely and too much. He was apparently extremely well aware of the fact that as a guest in Britain his life was sacrosanct and his liberty of movement unrestricted. Tros called him a spy to his face, but he only laughed and answered that Rome's eyes were as far-sighted as her arm was long. He followed that observation with a thinly veiled threat:

"What would the Britons do if they thought you were building this ship to use against them? A crew of Northmen, rebels, pirates—there are other kings besides Caswallon."

After that Tros gave the gods a dozen opportunities to terminate Galba's lease of life. Once, when he had a great beam hoisted, ready to be swung into the ship, and Galba stood beneath it looking at a newly invented boring tool, Tros knocked out the ratchet that held the crane-winch. But the beam struck the sheer-strake as it fell and was deflected, missing Galba by more than a yard.

It was the same when bronze was being poured, and Galba stood close to the mold. Tros put a little water in a hollow of the fire-clay trough and stepped well out of range of the explosion. The trough was blown to pieces and about half the bronze was spilled, but Galba seemed to bear a charmed life; not even a drop of the white-hot metal touched him.

But the closest that Galba came to death was when Tros was trying out the forward starboard catapult before hoisting and installing it. It was a thing entirely of his own invention that avoided the use of the twisted sinew springs the Romans relied on and that were so affected by dampness, dry wind, friction, heat and cold.

Between two uprights, thirty feet high, with a big bronze pulley-wheel on top, he had a rectangular lead weight weighing a ton, encased in wicker-work and hoisted by a winch. When a lever was struck by a mallet, the weight fell, and the sudden force of that was transferred to the missile by means of ropes and a sliding mechanism that jerked the missile forward through a long trough, which could be moved on a hinge and turn-table to give the necessary angle and direction. To prevent the falling weight from injuring the bottom of the ship there was a cushion of willow wicker-work; and to secure the maximum efficiency and range, the force of the fall was transferred to the propelling mechanism just before the weight reached bottom.

The first shot Tros fired with his new invention—a lump of rock the size of a man's head—went clear across the Thames and knocked a branch from a tree a hundred yards beyond the farther mud-bank. It was the second shot that very nearly ended Galba's campaign of investigation.

Tros invited him to examine the mechanism, ordered the weight cranked up, and proceeded to show him the ingenious bronze levers by which the speed of the projecting instrument was multiplied. He persuaded Galba to lean over the trough to examine its oiled grooves, and then with his own hand struck the lever that released the weight. But Galba looked up to watch a wild goose, flying overhead, so when the mechanism whizzed along its course his head still remained on his shoulders. But he grew very wary of Tros after that. He was a debonair, curly-headed, lightly framed Sicilian, who could be wary without inviting all the universe to pay attention to the fact.

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So Tros wasted a lot more ingenuity in the vain effort to send Galba to another world without himself incurring the responsibility. He even went to the length of entertaining Galba by Helma's fireside, and was perfectly frank with Galba concerning the reason for it:

"You are Cæsar's spy. For all I know, you have been sent to murder me. In Britain, if you murder a man whose food you have eaten, without first serving notice on him that you have become his enemy, they first torture you and then burn you to death."

"I am no man's enemy," said Galba, sipping at Tros' mead and apple guardedly, as if he thought it might be poisoned. "I studied philosophy in Syracuse. I believe that a man should attend strictly to his own conduct and leave others to govern themselves. Then such gods as there are, and whatever they are, preserve a man. They seem to have preserved me," he added pointedly.

"Nevertheless, I will make it known that you have eaten at my table," Tros remarked.

Galba spoke Gaulish with the skill of an intellectual, and that was the only tongue that Tros and Helma had as yet in common. Tros knew Greek, Latin and all the tongues of the Levant, including the Phœnician and Arabic, the Aramaic dialects and at least a smattering of Coptic. Helma knew only her own Norse and the Gaulish dialect men spoke in that corner of Britain, which differed only slightly in pronunciation from the speech of northern Gaul.

So it did not take the observant Galba any time at all to discover that the relationship between Tros and Helma was on a very different basis from that of, say, a Sicilian and his wife, or a Greek and the prospective mother of his sons. They stood more on a basis of equality and there was confidence between them, as if they shared together a tremendous secret.

Tros did not appear to him to be in love with his young wife or in love with anything except his ship, but he appeared to take it for granted that Helma also loved the ship, to regard her as a practical independent ally pledged to one course with himself. And that is a much more unbreakable bond between two people than any emotional love affair.

The confidence was proven by Tros' entire willingness to let Helma converse with strangers. In fact, he seemed to like her to take the burden of conversation, he alternately listening and lapsing into a brown study. Most of the time it was impossible to tell whether Tros was interested in the conversation or was visioning new details for his ship; but when referred to, he invariably had an answer ready.

So Galba made Helma's acquaintance carefully at Tros' fireside after the meal, while the slave-girl washed the dishes and Tros, in his great oak chair, removed the gold band from his forehead, solid, beaten from one of Cæsar's wreaths to replace the ancient one that he had broken and bound on Helma's arm that night he married her. It was heavy, and he liked to lay his head back and his feet up while he rested.

The Sicilian was an artful talker, not too ingratiating, not too given to open flattery, rather frankly curious, making his approach to Helma as he had approached Tros' shipyard, on a basis of privilege that might not be denied. He explained that he was one of Cæsar's gatherers of information about foreign lands. Cæsar was writing a book, omnivorous of facts. Could Helma tell him of the distant north from which she came?

SO HELMA told tales of the Baltic, and of the long nights farther north than that, where winter reigns for seven months, and of summers when there was no night. She told of fishing and of great whales, of fiords where the pines came to the water's edge and fishing fleets might be land-locked for a month on end by winds that blew forever from the westward and the northwest.

"And that is why Northmen are good at the oar, and why their ships are built to sail into the wind," she exclaimed.

She told of feuds and rivalries, and how her own brother Sigurdsen—"a king, a kings son, kings since before the ice came and the darkness shut down on the North—" had lost his heritage in battle and had put to sea with the remaining handful of his followers to seize for himself land in Britain. How they had raided Hythe and burned it. How they had come sailing up the Thames; how they had landed and burned two villages to force terms from Caswallon and his men; how Caswallon had the better of them in the fighting in the woods, until they retreated, only to find that the lord Tros had

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come up the Thames in a two-banked Roman fighting ship that he had won from Cæsar, and had hauled their longship into midstream.

Thereafter, proudly enough, she told how Tros defeated Sigurdsen in single fight, so that they all became Tros' prisoners of war. And how Tros had put no dishonor on her, he being a homeless man unmarried, "though a prince, a prince's son, a lord of the lords of Samothrace."

"Wherefore, he took me to wife, as the custom is and as my right was. I am a sea-king's daughter."

Presently, because Galba urged, she sang, her fingers plucking at imaginary harp strings and her strong young voice athrill with the heroic mystery of legend. But the words were Norse and neither Tros nor Galba understood a word of them. Nevertheless, Tros leaned forward in his chair to listen, and the lean-lipped, sarcastic Galba changed color, drumming in time to the song with those dark-skinned, deceitful fingers that looked capable of anything at all except hard work.

And so—because if you sing to a man of what your heart knows, you have given to him something you can not recall—there began a kind of intimacy, guarded indeed since Helma knew Tros mistrusted Galba, and she, too, mistrusted him; and not immoderately emphasized by Galba, who was subtle even in his method of discarding subtlety.

In his own turn Galba sang of Syracuse and of the wars of Sicily, of Carthage and of tyrants who played a losing hazard of intrigue between the Wolf of the Aventines and the Punic Lion.

Then Tros sang about Jason and the Golden Fleece, in a basso voice that crashed among the roof-beams, his eyes glowing as he all unconsciously revealed the grandeur of his own hopes and the splendor of his zeal to conquer far horizons. The words were Greek and Galba understood them; even he, though the apostle of all cynicism, understood Tros' heart was on his lips that hour and more than ancient legend was unrolling to the sea-wave tune. The words might crash on the ancient beaches of an unknown Euxine shore; but to Helma, ignorant of Greek, and to Galba, ignorant of all but cynicism, there swung into the mental vision paths along the moonbeams to a chartless ocean where the sea-birds were the pilots, and the lure lay in a man's own heart, not in the chink of commerce nor the clash of arms, not even in the thump of oar-beats or the thunder of the wind in straining sails, though the thunder and the oar-beats seemed to pulse in obbligato to the song.

And then Tros sang of the fall of Troy. He sang the Trojan view of it. Of Helen, fair-haired Helen, whom the Trojans thought worth dying for. He made a mystery of vision and ideals, raped from Greece—unworthy of them—and defended against all the gods of greed and envy and the men who hate those who have done what they have failed to do themselves.

"In the end you will die for a woman's sake," said Galba when Tros ceased singing and coughed, because the blue smoke filled his lungs. But Helma shook her head, thought otherwise.

CHAPTER VI

THE CONFERENCE OF KINGS.

MARIUS and Galba gave Tros less anxiety than did Taliesan, the lord high Druid, and certain British kings who jumped at opportunity to balk Caswallon. Galba's veiled threat materialized. Some said the Romans, through spies, had corrupted those kings, and that might be, for the Roman spies were everywhere. But none spoke of Taliesan except with awe. However, Fflur, Caswallon's wife, said they were jealous of her husband and suspected him of planning to make himself the paramount chief of Britain.

"Whereas," said Fflur, discussing events with Tros and Helma up on the stern of the big ship amid the din of hammer-blows, "if they only would believe it, he would rather hunt deer and make merry than anything else that the gods permit. He is too easy-going, too generous, too ready to make friends."

But Fflur was the daughter of Mygnach the Dwarf, and there was more insight and hind- and foresight in her heritage than in that of most women. She looked nearly young enough to be the sister of her oldest son; and yet there was old wisdom in her eyes and something akin to fear, as if she could see too much but could avoid too little.

There was Gwanar, king of the Iceni,

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breeder of horses and more or less ruler of hard-bitten men who were forever coming southward to Caswallon's country to sell mares. Gwanar and Fflur were first cousins, which tended to a peaceful settlement of most disputes, but Gwanar had not sent men to help resist Cæsar's first invasion, and he either believed or pretended to believe that the Roman would never repeat the attempt.

Then there was Caradoc of the Silures, who dwelt in the west where Druidism was far more than a religion; it was almost life itself. Caradoc might not have interfered; he was of the darker, swarthier type of Briton, of Iberian ancestry, and his lands were too remote for him to have troubled his head about Caswallon's alleged ambitions. But Madoc, king of the Coranians, had married his sister, who was known as a wise woman, wiser than Fflur. Madoc sent ambassadors to the Iceni and Caradoc followed suit.

They three brought in Gwenwynwyn of the Ordovici, lover of his own importance, bottled-nosed and crippled of one arm, who loved intrigue far better than plain dealing. Gweawynwyn of the Ordovici agitated and accused Caswallon to the Druids, mainly about Tros, whom he had never seen, until there was nothing left to do but summon a five-king conference.

The Druids would have preferred to avoid it. They were not in love with Tros, although they had regarded his father, Perseus, as a high priest, greater than all but a few of themselves. But they were not against him. And they were the only authorities who could guarantee the holding of such a conference without mismanagement or bloodshed.

Normally the Druids took no part in politics, but they recognized no boundaries to their own influence, which was as nearly entirely spiritual as it could be kept. Their supremacy was everywhere conceded, and they performed the ceremonies when a king was girdled with the gold insignia of office. Without the Druids' sanction there could be no kings. Their mound-encircled hospices were held so sacred that no king would have dared or would have dreamed of daring to enter without permission, or to hale forth even a murderer who had taken refuge there.

And the Druids did interfere whenever the kings exceeded their proper authority or entered into combinations against one another. They were ever ready with advice when asked. They sometimes volunteered it! They were held in such universal awe and reverence that if they told a king to abdicate he had no choice but to obey.

So it was always Druids who presided when the kings met; Druids who sent the invitations, although it was usually kings who pulled the wires that set Druids' influence in motion.

"What I need," said Caswallon to Tros one day when the invitation had arrived, "is an army of ten thousand men, ready to resist Cæsar. Then Cæsar would never invade. What they fear is that if I had such an army at my beck and call, I would use it to subdue all Britain. If the Druids should say yes, then I could have the army in a week. If they say no, then I shall never have it."

"If Cæsar should come, the Druids would suffer most of all. He hates them. They know it. Surely they will let you have the army, since it is your land that will be invaded first," Tros answered.

Caswallon shook his head. He knew the Druids, feared them, loved them in his own way, which was wholly Celtic. And he knew those rival kings.

"We will go," he said, "and at least thereafter we shall know the worst."

So Helma went with Fflur to stay at Merrow, where there was a sacred pool and near that, a farm belonging to Caswallon, they taking with them all those nine British slave-women who had given Tros such trouble. Fflur had a notion she could find them husbands among the hinds who watched sheep on Merrow Downs. Tros, yielding to Caswallon's importunity, spared three clear days of winter sunshine when the planking of the upper deck was being laid, dreading lest the parsimonious Sigurdsen should skimp the oil on the layer of linen between the double planking, or lest they should omit to cramp the woodwork properly before they drove the spikes, and went with Caswallon to the Druids' mound-encircled hospice nearby Verulam.

"Old, old as the hills is Verulam. There is the mint, and there my father lived. Ludd's blood! He had a good house, but I let the Druids have it when Taliesan came from the west. They keep the mint, which makes the gold and silver safe enough," Caswallon said as he drove at his usual

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speed, as fast as the gray stallions could lay hoof to ground, with Tros up beside him in the wicker-bodied chariot. "Verulam is a healthier place than Lunden. Better hunting, better pasture for the horses, no fogs from the river to give a man Ludd's ague, higher ground, better in every way. But no Druid, no king! I was proud that I had my father's house to give to Taliesan. He came and blessed my new house that I built in Lunden, saying it should not fall by fire or to a foeman in my day."

They did not go unattended. There was Orwic, Caswallon's cousin, at the head of four-and-twenty gentlemen-at-arms, some of whom were older than Caswallon and held rank as counsellors. Not a dark-haired man among them. They were of the aristocratic caste, descendants of tribes who came from oversea three centuries before. Landholders, rich in their own right, who might not be denied the privilege of riding escort to the king, as well as of knowing nearly all his business. And behind them rode as many grooms and servants, most of whom were not so fair-haired or so light-complexioned, some of mixed blood.

Caswallon was thoughtful and did not talk much during the long drive through the forest. Most of the way he frowned and muttered to himself, impatient when they halted at a mound-encircled roadhouse to change teams, refusing drink, eager to be off again.

"BROTHER TROS, we will need our wits," he said at last. "Lord Druid Taliesan is a brother of gods, wiser than Merlin, and he loves me. But there are Caradoc, Gwanar, Gwenwynwyn, Madoc, of whom two are crafty men, and two are fools. It is what you and I will say that *must* solve this riddle by persuading Taliesan. I wish my tongue were readier and my heart less so."

"Keep an open mind. Play my hand and I will play yours," Tros advised him.

"Good! Stand you by me."

Thereafter not one word until they galloped down a lane between enormous oaks and came on to the rising, open ground by Verulam, where the Druids' white hospice that was once Caswallon's father's house, gleamed in the setting sun above the turfed mound that surrounded it. The turf showed brown through rotting snow and the roof was green and gray in patches where the lichen edged the shingles. It was an enormous house, built mainly of adze-hewn timber.

There was a gathering of wool-robed Druids, and the mighty Taliesan himself in the midst of them by the gate in a gap in the encircling mound, but no sign of any other kings, although the hour was late.

"If we come first, good. And if we come last, better. Ludd deliver us if we are neither first nor last," Caswallon said, screwing up his eyes to scan the group of Druids. "The first and the last create a stir. Kings who are neither first nor last are nobodies."

There was a stir, at any rate, a fanfare of golden trumpets. The Druids received their guests with song and with holly garlands, even hanging wreaths on the horses' necks that pricked them and made them frantic. But that gave Caswallon a chance to display his horsemanship, which he enjoyed. He reined in the maddened stallions, tossed the reins to a groom who charged up in the nick of time, leaped to the ground and knelt for the old high Druid's blessing. Tros knelt beside him. Then they entered by a wide gate through an embankment supported on the inside by a wall of heavy timber, up which ivy climbed, a century old, its main stems thicker than a man's thigh.

Behind the chanting Druids Caswallon and Tros went arm-in-arm. They looked like two kings, not a king and his attendant, because Tros had donned his purple cloak for the occasion, bordered deep with gold embroidery. His deep-sea rolling stride was more majestic than Caswallon's, who had lived too long on horseback to walk handsomely. But neither of them held a candle to the old Lord Druid at the head of the procession—not for dignity or grace or majesty or any other attribute.

"Good! We are the last!" Caswallon whispered, and he kept the whole company waiting a good ten minutes longer while he and Tros washed themselves in a room to the left of the door.

There were four kings standing in a row before the hearth in the great inner hall, and on the far side of the round table and two long ones was a crowd of their retainers, counsellors, gentlemen-at-arms, bards, minstrels—crushing toes and shoving one another for the front rank.

The round table was on a dais that occupied about a quarter of the floor space at the

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farther end. From the dais to the door the two long tables were set parallel, spread with linen cloth and silver and pewter dishes. But the round table was spread with a finer cloth, bearing designs dyed in three colors. Its plates were of gold, the cups of colored glass, gold-edged.

The huge hall was entirely lined with dark oak, and there was a high gallery around three sides, over which whispering Druids leaned. They burst into welcoming song as Caswallon entered, and the four kings by the hearth stiffened themselves to show their breeding in four different ways—surly, supercilious, suspicious, condescending.

However, Caswallon out-kinged them. He stood, his followers in a formidable crowd behind, and let the old high Druid introduce him, as if he had never before seen one of those kings, was rather curious to know them and quite willing to be kissed on both cheeks, provided, by standing on tip-toe, they could reach that far.

"The lord Caswallon! The lord Tros!" said an announcer by the door. It might have been one of Caswallon's followers.

Young Orwic was quite capable of that.

"The lord Caswallon! The lord Tros!" the old Lord Druid repeated. And the four kings had to leave the hearth to come and kiss Caswallon, since he would not go to them.

They were neither shabby men nor insignificant. They stood like kings and were more richly costumed than Caswallon. Gwenwynwyn, king of the Ordovici, he of the bottle-nose, was dressed in cloth of gold with gold and amber ornaments. The others wore dyed woollen stuff and cloaks of imported Gaulish broadcloth trimmed with fur. They all wore gold chains and the royal golden girdle at their waists, but Caswallon and Tros, almost without an ornament between them, except Tros' jewelled sword-hilt and gold forehead band, outbraved them, nevertheless.

There was that about Caswallon in his plain, dyed wool and beautifully made cloak of figured deerskin, edged with gold and blue that no amount of ornament could offset. He looked open-countenanced and honest. His emotions were there for the world to see depicted on his face, and they were manly. When he laughed it meant he was amused. If he frowned he was angry. When he looked at the old Lord Druid he was half afraid and half affectionate. When four kings kissed him he was perfectly aware they did it with suppressed hate, and his face showed tolerant understanding of their jealousy.

He pulled Tros forward by the arm and made them kiss Tros, too. There was no way for them to refuse without open violence to the laws of British courtesy. Then he had them greet and give the curt, perfunctory embrace to every one of his escort, taking each one by the arm in turn to name him.

"So that is good. Tonight, at least, there will be no stabbing in the back," he laughed. Before they realized what he was doing he had taken precedence and was following the old lord Druid to the dais and the round table where five other Druids already waited.

So because he drew Tros with him arm-in-arm, he and Tros had seats on either hand of the old prelate with Druids on either side of them again. The other kings had no choice but to take the remaining seats, some with their backs to the two long tables. Druid and king alternated all around the table, none challenging Tros' right to royal honors, although Gwenwynwyn of the Ordovici scowled at him and took offense when he laid his jewel-hilted sword beneath his chair.

"You—you should have left that outside," he objected.

"Not with you near!" Tros retorted. They two were foes by instinct, without given cause or reason, which is the dealiest kind of enmity, the easiest to fan into a blaze, the least responsive to the efforts of any peacemaker.

When the followers of all five kings had elbowed and quarreled enough and had all found places at last at the two long tables, with monk-robed Druids behind them to act the hospitable part of serving-men, there was a note struck on a golden gong, which set the key for a hymn to Mother Nature, of which every man in Britain knew the words from end to end. The old lord Druid led the singing, but grew silent after the first few measures. There, after the choir in the gallery wove harmonies under the carved ceiling beams, the gentlemen-at-arms and serving Druids thundered the refrain. Then silence, and a blessing from the old lord Druid in a voice that sounded like the rolling of the wheels of golden destiny.

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Druids lit the sconces then, as if that were ritual. There was a rutching of the benches as men took their seats, and silence, broken only by such noises as a man must make if he chews meat with an open mouth and breathes through his nose because his mouth is full; that, the clatter of plates and the opening and closing of two doors, through which the Druids brought endless quantities of things to eat. All hungry. All on their best behaviour.

AT THE round table the silence was almost agonizing, each royal guest staring at Caswallon and Tros between mouthfuls, doing his best to stare them out of countenance and getting better than he gave, until the old lord Druid spoke at last and loosed their tongues. There was none, unless possibly Tros—he lacked the Celtic sense of reverence—who would have cared to speak until the prelate had spoken first.

The old man merely asked Caswallon how the roads were on the way to Lunden. But, that being Britain, the dam was down then and there began at once a cross-fire conversation about horses, hunting, fishing, scarcity of wild-geese and the quality of last year's oat crop. Babbling noise from the lower room told that the gentlemen-at-arms were also talking horse. Minute after minute the whole atmosphere grew friendlier.

Caswallon told a story about a favorite mare of his that bore two foals, both skewbald, and how the three together drew his chariot until the Romans came and they were drowned in the surf "all three fighting with their teeth against Cæsar's legions."

Gwanar, king of the Iceni, capped that with a story of a stallion that carried a fat man from sea to sea, the breadth of Britain, without rest or food. Not to be out-boasted by those two, Gwenwynwyn of the Ordovici told of a giant among his people who could lift a grown horse on his shoulders and carry the struggling beast from one town to the next.

THEREAFTER Tros told of sights he had seen by land and sea, and that was entertainment to which even the lord Druid listened eagerly. He spoke of the Pharos lighthouse, visible on a dark night from seventy miles away at sea,* whose giant lenses were of glass, made in Arabia, whose flame was from a rare oil found in the earth beyond the eastern Euxine shore, whose marble tower contained an engine worked by steam that hoisted the fuel and supplies out of boats in the sea below.

Then he told of the fane of Diana at Ephesus "all overlaid with silver," and of the temple at Jerusalem "of cedar and gold and stones ten cubits long," where, on feast days, it took from dawn to dark to slay the sacrifice, so many hecatombs of beasts were brought. And he spoke of King Ptolemy's palace on the Lochias at Alexandria "all hung with silk from somewhere eastward of the rising sun." He spoke of the wealth of Egypt, of the corn-ships that sailed in fleets bearing grain by the million bushels.

And presently the Gaulish wine began to flow, the Druids only sipping theirs, but the five kings drinking deep. The gentlemen-at-arms were served with mead, and not too much of it. Drunk or sober they would not dare to offend the Druids, but with too much mead in him, a man might forget wherein offense consists. Tros added water to his wine, and noticed that the old high Druid did the same.

In course of time, when the edge of a winter's appetite was dulled, the minstrels tuned their harps, each king's musician striving to excel with songs about ancient heroes. But as soon as each song was finished the Druids' choir in the gallery sang sacred harmonies that took the fight out of the gentlemen-at-arms, restoring them to more or less subdued exhilaration.

Then, when enough wine had been drunk at the round table, the old lord Druid made a signal and an attendant in the gallery struck the golden gong. He arose in the silence that followed, blessed them with murmuring lips and ancient ritual of movement, then stood for a moment with eyes gazing, as it were, through walls into another world. White beard falling to his waist, white hair on his upright shoulders, he looked like Time himself.

"My sons," he began at last, "O Lord Caswallon of the Trinobantes, Lord Tros of Samothrace, Lord Gwanar of the Iceni, Lord Madoc of the Coranians, Lord Caradoc of the Silures, Lord Gwenwynwyn of the Ordovici, noblemen of the escorts, priests of

*Doubtless Tros exaggerated

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the Ancient Mystery, we welcome you in the name of Fire, Air, Earth and Water that begat us all."

His voice was a singer's, trained to stir the audience and play on their aroused emotion as plucked harp-strings play on ears awakened by the drum.

"This life," he said after a moment's pause, "this little life we live, that flickers, burns into a man and flickers out again, is but one grain of sand upon a seashore, one drop in all the ocean of eternity, one link amid the endless chains of lives we live, living and dying, living and dying, as the tides flow, as the day succeeds the night and seasons follow seasons in the cycles of the law. O ye, who measure life by hours and years, I bid ye heed Eternity."

Thereafter, following a long, dramatic pause, he spoke of manhood and its debt to Mother Nature; he praised bravery and courtesy and all the qualities of mind and body that the Britons held in high esteem, until their eyes burned at the thought of heroes who had died defending homes against the raider and a stir, like the breath of a breeze among trees, went through the audience.

Then, subtly, as he wove his words into a skein of golden music, thrilling them with pride in their high birth and their descent from gods who walked on earth with men, he began to sound a warning note, at first a mere suggestion, then a hint.

"Last night I saw a falling star. Take heed lest ye fall."

That note set the key to his conclusion. He denounced all strife, but first and foremost all internal strife. He told them that the fate of Gaul, downtrodden under Cæsar's heel, was due to the Gauls' unrighteousness, their quarreling among themselves, their deafness to Druidic warnings and their listening to unwise agitators who had counseled them to take the sword instead of communing with the gods "who know men's destiny and are nearer than a man's breath, closer to him than his thinking."

He wetted his lips at a cup of amethyst and dried them on a linen towel passed to him by an attendant, then continued:

"Take not too much upon yourselves, nor trust too little in the gods who upreared Britain from the sea. The Gauls have fallen. They have made their Druids suffer for their sins. Take heed lest ye do likewise."

Then he blessed them sonorously, kings and all their followers standing with heads bowed. The Druids in the gallery chanted a response; and then he led the way in silence, followed by five kings, by Tros and by the five Druids who had sat at table with them, through a door on the right of the dais into another room to hold the conference.

CHAPTER VII

CASWALLON'S ULTIMATUM

IT WAS a large room, hung with embroidered woolen draperies, containing a fireplace nearly as large as the one in the hall they had left. Twelve high-backed chairs, gilded and carved, like thrones, were set in a wide semicircle facing the hearth. A Druid signified to each guest which his chair should be, and then the lord Druid sat on the one in the midst that was raised on a stand about six inches higher than the rest.

Tros, with a Druid beyond him, had a chair near the hearth. Caswallon faced him in the end chair on the right. Kings and Druids alternated, with Gwenwynwyn of the Ordovici, dark-faced, bottle-nosed and sly, on the old lord Druid's right.

For a while they sat and warmed themselves in silence, all apparent goodwill and well-fed contentment, except that Gwenwynwyn's smile foreboded trouble, and the shorter, dark-haired king of the Silures, Caradoc, watched him nervously, as if he were pledged to a certain course and dreaded it.

At last the old lord Druid broke the silence, elbow on the chairarm, cheek on hand, his voice as gentle as if he spoke to respectful children:

"My sons, I will speak of something that is simple, yet too easily forgotten. There were Britons in Britain before your forebears came. Ye call yourselves Britons without knowing why or what the word means. Some of your forebears came here from the eastward, crossing the sea in big flat-bottomed boats, because they were driven forth by men who had no liking for their strange gods. Here they found a swarthier, gentler people. Some they conquered, and with some they made treaties, living in armed suspicion side by side with them.

"Now this is a mystery. Ye all say ye are Britons, except the Lord Tros, whose father was a Greek, and yet whose mother was as much a Briton as the rest of you."

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Tros stared, not knowing who his mother was or what she was, except vaguely that she was of royal blood and had come from somewhere to the north of Macedon. She died when he was born; his father had seldom spoken of her, but might have spoken to the Druids of Gaul, who, in turn, might have told the secret to the British Druids.

"Ye know how rivers run," the old man went on in his gentle yet majestic voice. "A trickle, then a brook, then many little brooks, and then, at last, the river rolling seaward. All of it drops of water, rolling whence? Some rivers split and flow along two courses to the sea. Yet they are one and the same river, and the water comes from the self-same brooks, mingled and blended together, even as men are mingled and blended together from many sources, and become a race that flows on to its destiny.

"The Lord Tros' mother was of the race from which many of you who call yourselves Britons, are descended. It is the mothers who bear the sons, who are the channels in which the streams of human races run.

"And now I will speak of a greater mystery. They who had invaded these isles found here an ancient wisdom, older than their own idolatry. Lo, it had been always in the world. Their very ancient ancestors had known it, but had fallen into darkness. It was ancient. It was wise. And it reabsorbed them. They were as children coming home. They abandoned all their false gods, even as a river's branch goes wandering, and comes back to the stream at last.

"Now, yet another mystery. There were conquests here in Britain long before your forebears' time. The swarthier tribes they found here had themselves been conquerors in their day, coming from the south, so long ago that none remembers when; yet the tribes whom they found themselves had come centuries before they did from a continent that disappeared under the sea, because the guardians of the law grew weary of its wickedness.

"Yet even they, who came from lost Atlantis, found, already here before them, Druids who preserved the ancient wisdom. The ancient wisdom took them to herself and prospered them until they lost the key. Then others came, then others. Stronger men forever replace weaker men, as spring prevails over the decaying winter and as winter in its turn destroys the autumn foliage and covers all with snow. But beneath the snow life lives. None slays life, although he kills the body. None slays wisdom, though he act however foolishly.

"So they who were the keepers of the ancient wisdom, whom ye call Druids—though there was another name for them in those days—prevailed over all conquerors, simply because of wisdom, forever forfeiting the semblances as trees let go their leaves when winter comes, but husbanding the sap in which lies the secret of life.

"Men who were mighty men of war found they must come to the Druids for wisdom. The Druids knew that conquests and reconquests are a little matter, being no more than the ebb and flow of tides within the tides of evolution in the destiny of man. They were able to give wise advice, well knowing that tides can come and go without blood poured on the rocks of hatred.

"The conquerors learned to listen, and grew spiritual in the paths of peace. Men die. And races die. The very rocks die, and are turned into tree-bearing earth, drenched by the rain and washed by streams and rivers to the sea, to become who knows what future continents. Those rocks that endure the longest, in the end are broken by the builder, by the icefield, by the earthquake. Even the sun will die when it has run its course, until a time shall come when even the sun is born again.

"What dies is but the outer shape. When ye are dead, ye are reborn into another mold and even the dead mold ye used is shredded up into its elements and used by trees and what not else in the unceasing alchemy of nature.

"And now observe—a tide comes. Shall men resist it? Rome comes on a tide of destiny—an old wolf, wise in war, serving and served by evil. What did it avail the men who fought your forebears? To this day they are slaves, a subject race. Yet, notwithstanding, such small wisdom as remained to them, ye, conquering them, have copied, abandoning the idols that your forebears brought from oversea and honoring the wisdom we taught, we, the Druids.

"Had they not fought your forebears, they had not been conquered. Not a Druid would have died, impaled by the new invaders. Hear me! It is not three hundred years since men, whose very names ye bear, were hunting down the Druids here in Britain. Why? Because the blood-lust came

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of fighting. They believed the Druids taught the men who defended Britain to resist them with bloodshed and anger. Whereas the Druids taught the contrary, but they were deaf, and would not listen. And so your forebears slew the Druids, even as the Romans do in Gaul and as they will do here in Britain if ye offer them resistance.

"Our wisdom bids us think in centuries, whereas ye think in terms of hours. So I say make peace with the Romans, for they come like an advancing tide. If ye make peace, yè may absorb their strength and, keeping peace, give no excuse to them to wreak their savagery. Thus, we who serve the ancient wisdom may prevail over their ignorance and, taking no account of time—which is a little matter—conquer Rome in peace!

"If ye take arms against the Romans, it may be ye may hold them for a year or five or fifty. But in the end they will overwhelm you and their last fury will be ten times greater than the first."

HE WAS speaking to Celts and Tros included. They heard him in breathless silence knowing he spoke of realities, distinguished from the unrealities that impose themselves as daily life. They knew that behind his words there was another meaning, and an inner within that, to which none but Druids held the key. Not one, not even Tros, the son of an initiate of Samothrace, but that respected him as a man who walked with gods and communed with them hourly.

But Gwenwynwyn, king of the Ordovici, rubbed his bottle-nose and sought to twist that pause to his advantage, he being one of those who can see no profit for himself unless another loses. He feared Caswallon's power. He hated Tros without rhyme or reason.

"Lord Dragon," he began, in a voice that was as soft and gentle as his face was sly—for he came from the far west, many days' ride distant beyond the mountains from a country where men's voices were as musical as rain—"we ourselves know your words are true and sacred. But I am told the Lord Caswallon helps the Lord Tros to build a warship on the river near-by his town of Lunden. I am told, too, that he lent him men to raid Gaul. Is that the way to make the Romans treat us peacefully?"

Caswallon raised his fist to smite the chair-arm, but checked himself respectfully in time.

"Lord Druid," he said, forcing his voice to moderation, "you spoke of holding Rome at bay maybe for fifty years. That is a man's life. Shall we not play each of us a man's part if we resist the Romans that long? If I should leave my corner of Britain free, I would not fear to meet the judges of the dead. Did Fflur, the mother of my sons, bear men to wear the Roman yoke?"

The rebuke he received was swift and chilling.

"How free is your corner of Britain now?" the old prelate asked sternly. "Are there no slaves?"

Gwenwynwyn smiled. Caswallon put his head between his hands and sighed. But Gwanar, king of the Iceni, did not care to see Caswallon grinned at by a man who came from so far to the westward that one might almost say he was a foreigner. Gwanar's way was blunt and bluff when the lord Druid's eyes were not directed at him.

"Why does the Lord Tros build the ship?" he asked. "What can he tell us about that and about Gaul and Cæsar? That is—" he had caught the eye of Taliesan—"if your holiness permits."

Tros rose to his feet, and his sword that he had leaned against the chair, dropped to the floor with a clatter that startled all of them.

"Lord Taliesan, lords of Britain," he began.

The five kings shuddered when he used the lord Druid's name, but the old man, leaning to rest his chin on a hand far whiter than a woman's, nodded him permission to continue.

"Lord Taliesan, most reverend Druids, lords of Britain," he began again, "I am a blunt man. I am not schooled in subtleties of discourse. I am used to shipboard, where the gear, aye, and the wind and every detail of the ship is known by its proper name to save confusion. I pray you bear with me if I call danger by its right name. I uphold the Lord Caswallon.

"I have kept peace where the other man would let me all my days. I have seen peace broken for the sake of plunder, for the love of women and for revenge. Cæsar, the Roman, adds thereto a fourth way—ambition, greater than any the world has seen. Aye, greater than Alexander's. He is learned. He

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is the first of Rome's high priests.* Cæsar can split with you the fine hairs of philosophy and law. But he will come with legions and with tax-gatherers. And when he goes, it will be with chains of prisoners, leaving his lieutenants to complete the harvest he began, a harvest of money and slaves.

"The Lord Caswallon is for making ready once more and a last time, to smite the Roman legions when they set foot on the shore of Britain. I warn you, you will lose all and, not least, your old religion, unless the Lord Caswallon shall prevail over the Roman when that day comes.

"I know Gaul. End to end I know it. I have seen, with these eyes I have seen the Druids burned alive by Romans, their own Gauls not daring to prevent. Druids I have seen, tied hand and foot and five together, roasted over slow fires while the legions cheered."

There was a chorus of sibilant ejaculations. Not a king there but would rather die in agony himself than see a Druid harmed. But the old lord Druid nodded to Tros to continue.

"I came to Gaul to help the Druids. For the Druids' sake my father died, tortured to death by Cæsar because he would not tell Cæsar the Druids' secrets. I am no favorer of bloodshed, but I warn you, you must save this Isle of Britain from the Romans, or the ancient wisdom that your Druids serve will become but a myth, a memory. Men will know it no more.

"Rome tolerates all creeds, all priesthoods save and except that ancient widsom. She guts, defiles and burns out by the roots whoever and whatever teaches that Rome—rotten, bold and greedy—is not immortal, the beginning and the end.

"Water will rust iron," he said, looking straight at the old high priest. "I know, none better, that if the Romans conquer Britain, and though they rip the carcasses of all the Druids into bleeding clay, or throw them living into the arena to be burned or torn by dogs, the soul of your religion will persist. In the end it will weaken Rome, as water corrodes iron. But the water will be stained, poisoned until none can drink it."

He paused, looked at the five kings one by one, and then again at the white-haired Taliesan.

"I saw a man in Syria, who knew the secret of the fire. He carried hot coals in his hands. He walked on a bed of burning charcoal. He was unhurt. Scornful of men's ignorance or, it may be, pitying them, he bade them do the same. Some listened. I have seen the burned hands and the tortured feet of men who did obey him.

"You see me. I am a navigator. I can sail a ship through storm and darkness, leagues beyond sight of land, and make my land-fall. Shall I laugh and bid a landsman do the same?

"I have seen the Lord Caswallon ride an untamed horse, sitting the frantic beast as easily as I stand on a heaving poop or climb to a masthead. Shall he bid me ride the horse because he knows the trick of it?

"Shall a woman bid a man bear children?

"I have heard said and I believe you holy Druids understand far more of the laws of life than ordinary mortals do. I see that kings pay homage to you. In all modesty I tender mine. And yet, no doubt because you must, you keep those holy secrets to yourselves as intimately as a woman keeps the secret of gestation in her womb.

"Because and if you know how to prevail against the iron heel of Rome, by dying, maybe as a tree dies that the seed may live, shall you bid men who do not understand your mysteries to do the same?

"Behold me. No man ever lived or shall live who can make me strike one blow against another country's freedom. Saving your holy presence, none shall stay my hand from striking against Rome, if blow of mine can check that wolf-brood's cruel course!

"Slaves are there in Britain? Holy Taliesan, Rome eats slaves as fire eats fuel! She imports them by the hundred thousand and they die like droves of rats. They sell the women to be perched in chairs along the mean streets to solicit passers-by. They send the strong young men into the arena to die fighting one another or to be tossed by bulls or torn by hungry brutes. They sell the heart-broken and unresisting to the land owners to toil under the lash on farms, thus forcing their own Italian freemen to become soldiers, since there is no work left for them to do. The soldiers go forth conquering more countries, capturing more slaves,

*Pontifex Maximus—an office that Cæsar held almost as soon as he was old enough to wear the toga. Tros undoubtedly understood that this office was mainly political, but he also knew that his hearers, except perhaps the Druids, did not understand that.

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plundering more treasuries for gold with which Rome may gorge herself."

He paused.

"I build a ship. By the Lord Caswallon's leave I build a ship. I build her to defend myself against the Romans and to set forth seeking some far corner of the earth that Rome has not polluted."

He stooped, picked up his sword and held it by the scabbard, shaking it above his head.

"I crave peace," he said in his ringing voice that thrilled with love of action. "My heart yearns for the sunlit skies, stars and the open sea. It is enough for me to wage that war within me that a man must before he may dare to hope for freedom. But I love life. It pleases me to call no king my master and to bind myself to obey no senate's bribed and compromised decrees. Of all things, independence is my first love, freedom to go how, when and whither I will. Yet I say this——"

He paused dramatically, lowered the sword and leaned both hands on it.

"What I seek for myself, I will deny to no other man. What I seek for myself, I will fight for for another's sake. Myself, my ship, my men and all I have are at your service, if you yourselves will fight for your own freedom."

HE SAT down amid grunts of approval, and Caswallon spanked his hand down on the chairarm. But the Druids sat still, and Gwenwynwyn of the Ordovici, on the prelate's right hand, took advantage of the ensuing silence.

"Why do they call it the dungship?" he asked in his suave, soft, musical voice.

And three kings laughed. Gwenwynwyn dropped more water on the fire:

"Myself, I have come a very long way to discuss peace in the presence of the son of Dragons. I could have heard the dunghill cockadoodles crow at home."

"Ludd's blood!" Caswallon was quicker on his feet than Tros, but the old lord Druid checked them both with no more than a gesture.

"No oaths here!" he said sternly. "No violence!"

They two sat down again, and both men looked ashamed.

"I have heard that the Lord Tros consults sorcerers about the dung and such matters as that." Gwenwynwyn added.

"Peace!" Taliesan commanded. "Lord Gwanar, let us hear your view of this."

But Gwanar, king of the Iceni, came from Lindum where impenetrable marshes to the south and eastward circled and divided up the pasture land. So were men's minds, definite and plain in some things but venturing with caution on to unknown ground. He rose to his feet:

"Lord Druid, might we hear the Lord Caswallon first?"

The prelate nodded. Caswallon rose, the firelight showing up the woad-blue patterns on his white wrist as he twisted his moustache. Anger blazed in him when he met Gwenwynwyn's eyes, but he controlled it when the old lord Druid frowned.

"Brother of gods," he began, then threw both hands behind him and his chin up in a gesture of resolution. "Like the Lord Tros I have sought peace, and I think you know that. I continue to seek peace. But the Cantii, to the southward, look to me to help them repel Cæsar, who has sent ambassadors to me. I have not yet answered those ambassadors, except with a challenge to Cæsar to fight me hand-to-hand, which they say they will not carry to him. I think that if my brother kings would lend me men so that Cæsar should know we have an army too numerous for him to overcome, then we might have peace certainly."

He sat down again and threw one long leg over the other, leaning back to study the faces opposite. But Tros noticed that his wrist was trembling. There was an explosion coming.

Gwenwynwyn, safe at the prelate's right hand, stirred the danger mischievously, speaking in a voice as gentle as a child's.

"If we should send men, then we would have none to defend us if the Lord Caswallon should himself try to conquer Britain."

The explosion came.

"Send none!" Caswallon answered, leaping up. "I want no weaklings! You have no men strong enough to march the distance! Let them wait there in the west until Cæsar comes and carries them to Rome in chains! I will be glad to see it!" He paused because the old Druid checked him. "Lord Druid, may I speak? I will state this question plainly. No, I care nothing about the Lord Gwenwynwyn. Let the Romans have him and his people. I will say no more about him."

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"Speak courteously," Taliesan commanded.

"Brother of gods, I speak in reverence," Caswallon answered. He stood with bowed head, then looked up slowly. "You have said it is not wise to resist the Romans. But I am the one who must feel their heel first. I am a king and I must aid my people. I am willing. Cæsar has sent ambassadors. They offer me Cæsar's friendship. They offer to make me king not only of a part of Britain, but of all of it."

"There! There!" Gwenwynwyn interrupted. "Didn't I tell you? Didn't I tell you?"

"Peace! The Lord Caswallon speaks," said Taliesan. He appeared unmoved, but he was almost supernaturally calm.

"Son of the Eternal Sun, I speak with reverence, but in despair. What I must suffer, let these suffer with me! I will do more than yield to Cæsar. I will say to his ambassadors that he should come soon, swiftly."

"No! No! No!"

Four kings were on their feet, gesturing indignantly, but they sat down when Taliesan motioned.

"There," Gwenwynwyn interjected, suavely as a critic at a singing competition. "He is Cæsar's friend. I said so."

And Caswallon thundered at him—

"If I must be Cæsar's friend to save the holy Druids, then I will be!"

Gwanar, king of the Iceni, rose at that.

"Watch me then! See how soon I will overrun your country! I will burn Verulam and Lunden before ever you let Cæsar come!"

"Who threatens? I will have no threats here!" Taliesan exclaimed in a voice that brought utter silence. For a minute there was no sound except heavy breathing and the crack of burnt wood falling on the hearth. Then he nodded to Caswallon to continue speaking, though he looked too tired to hear him.

"Lord Druid, I have done with threats. I speak of what is. Let the outcome rest with you. Rule you, my brother kings. Tomorrow I will answer Marius, the Roman, and he shall say to Cæsar one of two things. Either he shall say, 'Come, Caswallon welcomes you!' or he shall say 'Caswallon and his brother kings have raised ten thousand men and will resist invasion!' That is my last word. I speak with reverence."

He sat down. Tros nodded. But a great sigh came from the white-haired Taliesan. Then a stillness fell, in which the cracking of the burning logs was like the snapping of loud whips. Red firelight fell on a dozen spellbound faces, bearded and unbearded alternating. The old lord Druid's white hands gripped the throne-arms. It was his turn next to speak. He and none other could control those kings. In his hands lay the issue, peace or war.

They waited, hardly breathing. The firelight flickered. A big log cracked and fell among the crimson coals, tossing a burst of sparks.

"He sleeps," said a Druid, leaning forward, holding up a finger.

But the old lord Druid stirred. Three times his lips moved, but no sound came. Three times he grew rigid and relaxed, all eyes observing. Then his head fell forward on his breast and both hands slipped on to his lap.

"He is weary. He sleeps," said the Druid again, but five kings stared with frozen faces and none else said a word.

Tros moved from his place on tiptoe, passing through the shadows behind the chairs, and leaned over the throne-back from behind. None breathed. There was no sound other than the cracking sparks. Then Tros' awed voice broke hoarsely on the stillness—

"He is dead!"

CHAPTER VIII

EOUGH, THE SORCERER.

A DRUID, face whiter than his robe, took Tros' sleeve, drew him into shadow behind the semicircle of chairs and faced him, his hand on Tros' forearm trembling.

"Dead!" he said. "Do you know what that means?"

"It means war," Tros answered in a growling undertone.

"Gone! The last of the Great Druids! None to replace Taliesan! Go you—" He took Tros feverishly by the shoulder—"go you to the dining hall. Keep silence. See that the kings' followers suspect nothing until we decide what shall be told, and when and how."

"Another could do that better than

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I," Tros objected. "The Lord Caswallon——"

The Druid gestured with his head toward the firelight where five kings knelt. That, plainly, was a family affair. Decency forbade intrusion. Tros tiptoed to his chair, picked up his sword, buckled it with a shake of the hips and shoulders. Then, not glancing once behind him, he tiptoed to the door, unlocked it and passed out into darkness.

There was a passage twenty feet long, with a door at the farther end. He had time and opportunity to gather all his wits.

So when he emerged on to the dais in the dining hall he had managed to assume that carriage of the loins and shoulders of a man who has accomplished, who awaits but the announcement of success. It was a true stage entrance that he made, into the fire- and sconce-light. Babbling of tongues ceased. All eyes turned toward him. A minstrel, strumming wandering airs, muted a chord with the flat of his hand.

"Noblemen," said Tros, and his voice was confident, "I beg leave to enjoy your company. The chief Druids and your kings confer about an offer I have made them."

His words fell flat. He knew why. He had come forth from the conference unattended, which was such an unheard of thing in that land of ceremonious hospitality that it conveyed an impression of something being wrong. Before anyone could question him, he had forestalled the question, head to one side, grinning:

"Your kings would let none leave the room with me, lest I persuade him while their backs are turned! Shall I try my eloquence meanwhile on your good company? Or have you better entertainment?"

They had been growing rather bored with their own expedients for keeping out of mischief. The Druids appeared to have received strict orders to keep them sober, so the mead, good though it was, came slowly up the cellar stairs in parsimonious installments.

Some of them were playing games with knucklebones across the table. Others had been half asleep when Tros came in. All roared to him for a story. Druids, calm-eyed and incurious, as much at a loss as priests in general are to entertain men who would rather be elsewhere or else drinking themselves quarrelsome, added their voice to the chorus. Tros spread his legs, threw his hands behind him, and began without more ado—

"I wager you have never heard of Troy."

And he began to tell them that tale, alchemy of will recoining Greek hexameters into the prose of Gaul the while he stood there and kept tragedy at bay. He concentrated all his intellect, his whole genius. And he began by picturing the fair-haired Helen for them as a British woman, whom each man present might have known and loved.

No question that he held them. From the moment that he spoke of Helen, blue-eyed, with the spun-gold tresses and the smile like rosy morning on a whitecapped sea, he had them by the heartstrings and imaginations. All he needed then was music, and a minstrel came unasked to sit on the floor of the dais, eyes fixed on Tros' lips, and pluck suggestive harp-strings that began to change the prose into a chant until Tros was singing, almost before he was aware of it.

But he had not sung farther than the rape of Helen—she had not reached Troy—when a horn blown down the night wind, outside the building and beyond the gate, brought every man in the room upstanding. There came a clamor on the great gate bell. Men's voices raised in anger, fear, haste, panic or some such emotion. The rattle of bronze and squeak of an opening gate. Then cantering horse hoofs and a thunder on the hospice door.

None spoke. Men looked to their arms that stood in rows against the long wall opposite the hearth where a Druid stood on guard, his hand raised. None beneath the rank of king might wear his sword in that place, and none dared disobey the Druid. Four Druids hurried to the door; the rest dispersed themselves about the room, ready to check too headlong curiosity.

The thundering ceased, and on a blast of wintry air that sent the smoke billowing from the hearth, five Britons burst into the room at the heels of a man who was neither Briton nor yet Northman, but the half of both. They shouted for the Lord Caswallon, but he cried, "Tros! The Lord Tros!" with a parched throat, and there was frozen slobber on his beard. He staggered, lurched into the room, blinded by the firelight. Tros leaped from the dais and in six strides had him by the shoulders.

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"Now then, Skell, what is it?"

Skell could not speak. Tros shook him, but the words cracked in his throat. It was the five who followed Skell, who broke the news:

"The Lady Fflur — raped — gone, the Romans have her!"

Turmoil! Such a roar as goes up when the battle ranks engage. Tros seized a half-filled mug of mead and thrust the rim of it between Skell's teeth, bending his head back by the hair, holding his shoulders in the hollow of his left arm. Skell swallowed half-a-dozen gulps, spat, broke his own news:

"Helma! The lady Helma! Gone! The Romans have her!" Suddenly his own fear for himself came uppermost. "Lord Tros, not my doing! No, no! Not I! Skell was faithful!"

He vomited the mead on to the floor. Tros gave him more of it.

"Now speak," he said, "for this time I believe you."

THERE was too much stark fear in the eyes of Skell for anything but naked tragedy to lie behind it. Never a man in that emotion thought of coining lies. Truth he might not tell, but it would be the truth as he conceived it.

"Speak!" Tros said again, and shook him, but Skell was losing consciousness.

His eyes were glazing with the film that comes of uttermost exhaustion. Hands pawed feebly at the air, knees doubled under him, and what few words he murmured died in the babel of hoarse British shouting before they reached Tros' ear.

And then Caswallon, pale as a ghost from a tomb, the woad-blue patterns on his neck and forearms standing out like fretwork, back to the door to keep the other kings from bursting through, his eyes ablaze with horror.

"Hold!" he thundered in his line o' battle voice that crashed among the ceiling beams.

And there was silence for the space of ten breaths. Then the hoarse voice of one of the five messengers—

"The Lady Fflur, gone, seized on her way to Merrow—Romans!"

There was thumping on the door behind Caswallon, but his hand was on the bronze latch and there were no four kings in Britain who could break his finger hold.

"Tros!" he said.

"Aye," Tros answered, "they have Helma too."

The blood crept back into Caswallon's face until the veins of his neck swelled and his cheeks flushed.

"Britons!" he said. "The great Taliesan is dead. He died with the word Romans on his lips!"

He let the latch go, striding forward to the dais edge, and four kings came in a hurry through the door behind him, each as fantom-pale as he had been. They were in time to listen, that was all. Caswallon had the ears of that assembly.

"Sons of Britain!" he began. "Will you endure that Romans send ambassadors to me to blandish us with words and seize my wife, a king's wife, while my back is turned in conference with holy Druids?"

There began a clatter of swords and swordbelts as the Druid by the wall gave every applicant his weapon. Small risk of a quarrel now between the five kings' followers, and a chance, a hope at any rate, that they would cut their visit short on receipt of that emphatic hint. The laws of hospitality were adamant. Not even Druids could have asked them to depart.

"Britons!" Caswallon thundered. "What would you think of a king who should submit to this indignity! This outrage! Rot me the king who would endure the hundredth part of it! I lead against the Romans! Who comes?"

They roared and, breaking the druidic rule, drew swords, stamping their right feet until the floor shook and the ceiling-beams were thunderous with tumult.

"Britons!" yelled Caswallon. "The Lord Taliesan, the son of Dragons, brother of the gods, is dead!"

Silence again, save only the murmur of awestruck Druids passing somebody's command in undertones. Caswallon dropped his voice to a sepulchral note.

"These four, my brother kings, will bear me witness that the great lord Druid died in conference, his whole attention strained to keeping peace with Rome! The gods have summoned him. He died, the word unspoken. There is none now to advise us how the gods would rede this riddle. There never was in our day one but that grand lord Druid, whom we loved, who could have told us how to tolerate this outrage without losing manhood. Are we men?"

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He paused.

"I will speak no word of vengeance in this holy place, this house where my father lived, where I was born, that I gave to the great lord Druid. But I speak of manhood, that he praised this night to all of you. The word he left unspoken, speak ye! The riddle that he died before he answered, answer ye! Is it peace or war with Rome?"

They drew their swords again. Eyes met. There was a long breath and a thunderous answer—

"War!"

"War be it!" said Caswallon, turning to the four kings who had had no say at all in that decision. He offered to embrace them, and the first two kissed him with good grace. Gwenwynwyn of the Ordovici, third in line, however, stepped back and his silky voice sweetened the silence.

"A minute. Whose wife is missing? My wife keeps her household modestly where I left her in Glamorgan."

Caswallon checked him with a gesture that looked like a blow controlled in time.

"No arguments!" he said. "Gwenwynwyn, lord of the Ordovici, you and your followers may go home!"

"Indeed, and we do!" Gwenwynwyn answered. "My brother kings bear witness that the great lord Druid spoke of peace. He died, having spoken of nothing else than peace. He did not speak of hunting other men's stray wives."

Gwanar, king of the Iceni, stepped between the two and threw an arm around Caswallon's shoulder.

"The Lady Fflur is worth a thousand men and fifteen hundred horses!" he said boldly. "So they shall go with you to Gaul if need be."

"That is a new way to sell horses," Gwenwynwyn said in an aside that could be heard throughout the room.

"Horses?" Tros exploded. He had left Skell in the hands of Druids who knelt on the floor beside him, administering some kind of drug. Caswallon's messengers were talking to excited groups.

"Who has ships? My man Skell says the Lady Fflur, my wife and seven slave-women, along with eight or ten of their escort, were seized on their way to Merrow by a party of Romans dressed like Gauls. Marius and Galba——"

"Who went in pursuit?" Caswallon interrupted.

"Skell says half the countryside."

Caswallon barked for his own five messengers. They left the groups and came to stand in line before him.

"Sieves!" he said, scowling. "Tosspots! Bottomless buckets of gossip!"

He forgot that he had given them no opportunity to tell their tale to him direct. Now they confirmed what Tros said, adding:

"Pursuit started late. One of the slave-women gave the Romans the slip and made her way to a farmhouse. A man put her on horseback and they killed both horses under them. He rode to Lunden, she to the shipyard. Sigurdsen found a horse for Skell and sent him hotfoot, because of all in the shipyard, only Skell knew the way to Verulam. We overhauled Skell not a mile from here."

"One more such service, and I set Skell free!" Tros muttered.

"Lord Caswallon, come and look at the horses if you think we wasted time," urged one of the messengers.

"Horses? Ships!" Tros exploded again. "That honest Marius had this planned from the beginning! I will wager all my shipyard to a broken wheel that the Romans had a fast ship waiting in the port of Hythe. The Northmen burned Hythe. There would be no Britons there. They can't rebuild the place before spring."

"No," said a messenger. "The slave-girl told us they were headed eastward, toward Thanet, maybe."

"Quick then!" Tros was thinking instantly in terms of wind and tides. "To the south coast with a hundred men! Take ships and head them off. Get between them and Gaul!"

"No ships," Caswallon answered with a gloomy shoulder shrug. "All hauled out for the winter, cordage laid away. My Lunden men may overtake them before they reach Thanet," he added, trying to speak hopefully.

"Not they!" Tros answered. "The Romans are good on land; they lay all plans carefully. It is only at sea they are duffers. It might take them a week to reach Gaul from Thanet unless the wind backs to the northeast."

"Which it will, Caswallon said.

"Which it will," said Gwanar, king of the Iceni.

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Tros knew they spoke the truth. The marvel was that a Roman ship should have reached Thanet in winter time in the teeth of the prevailing northeast gales. Yet there could be no other possible solution of the riddle. Neither Marius nor Galba would have taken flight unless a ship were waiting to carry them back to Gaul. It would have been absolute madness to carry off Fflur and Helma unless they could convey them out of reach. Fflur's and Helma's value would be as hostages in Cæsar's camp.

"We waste time," Caswallon said. "Who comes? Gwanar—" he turned and looked into the eyes of him of the Iceni— "will you send me the thousand men?"

Gwanar nodded.

"You must feed them," he answered.

Tros, hands behind him, grinding his teeth savagely, strode up and down the dais. Ship not yet half-built, young wife in Cæsar's hands, friendship to Caswallon pledged, the bireme he had won from Cæsar three parts broken up, all useless, and no British ships available or even seaworthy, supposing they could be fitted out within a week or a month or three months. A fine predicament.

"Fool that I was to take a woman to myself!" he muttered, knowing, nonetheless, that he loved Helma and would bring her back from Gaul or perish trying. He recalled his father's words:

"A woman is experience, a man's friend insofar that she provides experience. Nevertheless, my son, experience is warfare between soul and circumstance. The less a man is tangled up with circumstance, the more he is his own master and free to enlarge horizons."

Tros knew he was not his own master that hour and it fretted him more than did the thought of being tricked by Cæsar's jackals, Marius and Galba. He felt like a man in chains. Had only Fflur been carried off, he could have abandoned his own plans cheerfully and have thrown his whole strength and resources into an effort to help Caswallon. That would have been sacrifice for friendship's sake, a satisfying, splendid course, whatever came of it. But now he must abandon all plans and unite his efforts to Caswallon's for his own sake, for his own pride.

The love he had begun to feel for Helma he recognized as something he might not repudiate and might not subordinate to other considerations. So long as she was faithful to himself, he had to set her first in his appalling host of obligations.

Suddenly he turned and took Caswallon by the shoulder.

"Friend o' mine," he said, "will you guard my back if I pluck these chestnuts from the fire for both of us? Ludd rot these other kings! They stink of jealousy! Gather your thousand men, ten thousand, any number. But guard my shipyard while I outspeed Cæsar! Should I fail, you will have the men to follow up with, though the gods alone know how you will ever carry them to Gaul! Speed is the first consideration, speed the second, speed the last! Will you trust me?"

"As for that, I have ever trusted you. Let us go. We will talk on the way," Caswallon answered.

But that was Britain. They could not take Roman leave as Marius had done. There were farewells, ceremonious and long-drawn, blessings from the Druids, and a midnight invocation to the gods who had summoned the great Taliesan at last to impoverish men's counsels and enrich their own.

"Him whom we revered, treat ye, O Powers of the light that burns in darkness, with all honor and all gentleness. As he poured wisdom on us, pour ye your love on him."

Then away under the frosty stars, Caswallon driving faster than his gentlemen-at-arms could ride and Tros beside him huddled against the wind that nipped face, feet and hands, Caswallon tossing down to Tros disjointed scraps of conversation.

"None to replace Fflur, and Cæsar knows it!"

Then presently—

"None to replace Taliesan. The gods know that!"

Silence, and after a while:

"Taliesan could have solved it. Hi-yeh! Hup! Ludd love 'em, but the Druids keep fat horses! We'd have done better with my own tired team."

Silence again, the trees like phantoms flitting by, steel stars overhead, no clouds, but a wind that cut like a whiplash. Then:

"I would have listened to Taliesan. If he had answered one word. But he didn't, and now Cæsar's answer comes. War! So be it."

He made harsh noises with his teeth that

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sent the horses headlong, faster than ever. The din of the escort galloping behind grew more remote. Tros beat his fingers on the wooden rail that topped the basket-work. Presently Caswallon again:

"These horses are like snails! And Fflur in the hands of Marius! Will he dare insult her? Will he dare——"

Noises in his teeth; then whip and a furious charge at a watercourse where the cat's ice crackled at the stream's edge and the water raced among the singing stones. A bump that made Tros's spine tingle and his teeth snap, a shout, ice-cold spray that froze on the face and on the chariot side, a swift succession of swaying jerks, and they were up the far bank, Caswallon easing the team to a canter to let them recover wind. Then:

"No chance of learning anything this side of Lunden unless they might have sent a messenger to meet us. Left or right, nobody'd know anything."

"Yes," said Tros.

"Who?"

"Eough."

"The sorcerer? Ludd save us, Tros! From Taliesan's death chamber to the charcoal-burner's wizard? What next?"

"Any lee in a gale!" Tros answered. "Eough can help us. I sent him a full firkin of new cod's oil less than three days gone. Turn out when you come to the track that leads to Eough's place."

"We passed it long ago."

"No lies to me, Caswallon! You and I are too good friends, and you too much the man for that game! Turn out on the road to Eough's. I'll swallow the blame for sorcery, which frets me not at all. Good Taliesan is gone. We must make the best of evil Eough."

"A mad night! ——, a mad night!" Caswallon muttered.

But when they reached the mound-encircled roadhouse where the teams were changed he sent all of his escort except Orwic ahead of him along the road to Lunden, giving no excuse except that they should gather news and have it ready for him against his coming. Tros pulled Skell down from behind a Briton's saddle and ordered him into the chariot.

"Skell knows more than he has told," he muttered, stamping his feet to warm them.

"Ludd's liver! What would my men say if they knew I rode to Eough's on such a night!" Caswallon remarked, examining the fresh team, tightening a bridle. "Orwic, Druid's curses on you if you tell what you shall see tonight!"

But Orwic laughed. His younger generation lacked a good deal of its elders' piety.

"I am all for seeing sights," he answered, mounting a ramping stallion that swerved away from him. But he was in the saddle quicker than the squealing brute could move "Lead on. This is cold work, waiting."

FOR about three-quarters of an hour they followed in the escort's track, then suddenly Caswallon swung the team around a clump of oaks and drove full gallop into the gloom of a sighing forest. No stars now. There was hardly a glimpse of sky between the swaying treetops. Only a gloom that even Tros's eyes hardly penetrated—black, solid night on either hand, that breathed of dry leaves. Ahead, a winding trail that took the whole of Caswallon's woodcraft and all his horsemanship to follow. He drove headlong, leaning forward, crying to the horses.

Once when he pulled up sharp at a fallen tree before he plied the whip and jumped it, Orwic, thundering behind, reined in the red stallion with forefeet over Tros' head. Once they plunged into an icy marsh, and Orwic's stallion had to be hitched to help the struggling team toward a bed of rushes, whence they staggered back to firm ground. And once both horses fell in a frantic heap on the ice at the edge of a watercourse. The twisted harness had to be untangled in the dark, both horses kicking blindly and Caswallon laughing nervously as he hove them to their feet by main force.

"Not so bad," he commented. "I had expected worse than this!"

Then on again, full pelt beside the brook where pollard willows looked like goblins in the wan gloom and the rabbit holes, between the patches of refrozen snow, were a maze of unseen danger underfoot.

Both chariot horses limped when Caswallon reined at last before a thatched mud hovel and Orwic, leaning from the saddle, thundered with his spear butt on the oaken door. Caswallon got down, feeling the horses' forelegs, and there was a long wait, no sound from within the hut, until Orwic wheeled his stallion away and, retreating twenty or thirty yards made ready to charge and smash the door to splinters. It was

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then that a voice from an oak tree called to them.

"What damage have I done you? Why break my house?"

It was a voice as clear and ringing as a young man's, with a note of anger in it and no reverence. Orwic rode under the tree and poked among the branches with his spear-point.

"Come down, and tell us where to find Eough!" he shouted.

"I can tell you that without coming down, and you can't reach me with the spear!" the voice retorted. "Caswallon, the king, Tros, the ship-builder, and Orwic, the coxcomb! Come from seeing the Great Druid die! Blind as bats in daylight, all of you! I know! I watched the heavens from a tree-top."

"Come down!" commanded Orwic.

"Get an ax. Cut down the tree!" Caswallon ordered, blanketing the horses. That would have been real generalship, except for one or two facts. The tree, for instance, was eight or nine feet thick, and there was no ax.

"Come down, Eough, or I will send Skell up after you!" said Tros.

"I am not afraid of Skell, who is afraid of me!" the voice retorted.

"Oh, very well," said Tros, and began to pull his cloak off. "I'll come!"

"I can jump like a squirrel from tree to tree. What do you want? Have you brought some fish oil? Charcoal for fish, dung for oil, nothing for nothing! Caswallon is a king. People who trust kings deserve to be tricked!"

"My promise."

"Promise of Tros the ship-builder? Fish Oil Tros. Smoked Herring Tros. Cod's Liver Tros. Horse Dung Tros. Very well, I'm coming."

He came with so little noise and on the far side of the tree that he was on the ground before they were aware of it, a dwarf in a jelly-bag cap and leather jerkin, with a beard to his middle and long hair over his shoulders; in all respects a giant in miniature—heavy, strong, athletically shaped, walking toward them as if he owned the forest. The horses shied, but not at him. When he whistled, a wolf came and fawned against his legs.

He made no remark, but went to the back of the hut and entered through a window. Presently, from within, he opened the door and stood there with a newly lighted fire blazing on the hearth behind him. Smoke filled the room, not finding its way out yet through the square hole in the thatch. With smoke and fire behind him, he looked like a gnome from the infernal regions. Caswallon made motions with his right hand and muttered invocations to the Lords of Light.

"Kings who enter here must bow their heads!" said Eough. He laughed, and slapped the arch of the low door. "High enough for me! You big proud fellows stoop, stoop all of ye! Skell, the squealer, Skell, the slave, Skell the pirate's ——. Leave Skell to watch the horses. Lame horses I must mend their legs. Come on in. What are you waiting for? Caswallon, Caswallon, the king is afraid! So would I be afraid if I hadn't the given word of Fish-Oil Tros. Come in."

He turned his back on them, and they entered one by one into a dingy cabin, marvellously clean but heaped with odds and ends. Bags, hanging from the roof-beams, bulged with mysterious contents and had to be dodged, although Eough's head missed them comfortably. He set three stools before the fire, signed to his visitors to sit down and himself stood with his back to the wall in the one place where the smoke did not curl in stinging clouds.

HE WAS apple-cheeked, and the cheeks were bright red, as red as his cap, from exercise in the frosty night. Crowsfeet at the corners of his eyes betrayed age, but he looked otherwise not older than Caswallon, until he showed his hands, that were an old man's, knotted with protruding knuckle bones. His bare legs, strong as oak boughs and as brown as oak tan, had not a hair on them.

"Now," he said, "Taliesan is dead, and so you come to me. I could have told you Taliesan would die. His time had come. I was up in the treetop watching the conjunction of the stars. Kings and fools don't understand such simple mysteries."

"What else did the stars tell you?" Tros asked, pointing at him with his long, sheathed sword.

"Put that thing down!" He whistled the wolf and it came lip-lifted, snarling. "You didn't come to ask me about stars or about Taliesan, who was a good friend of mine, although you, you fools, call me a sorcerer. If it hadn't been for Taliesan

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your pack of hunting, drinking, swaggering madmen would have tried to kill me long ago, but Taliesan knew the charcoal-burners must have a wise man to guide them. Who will protect me now Taliesan has gone? You?" he asked, pointing a crooked finger at Caswallon.

"Come to the point!" said Orwic, grinning, touching the dwarf's breast with the point of the long spear. "Tros thinks you can tell him something. Tell it!"

"You will protect me?"

"I have given you dried fish and fish oil, lots of it," said Tros. "I want sulphur tonight."

"You shall have it."

"It was you who told me, a month ago, which way two of my runaway slaves had gone. Tell me now where the Lady Fflur is, and my wife Helma."

"The Romans have them. Any fool could know that."

"Where?"

But Eough shook his head.

"I don't trust kings."

Tros looked at Caswallon, who screwed up his face in unconcealed disgust. He was an easy-going king, but had his prejudices.

"He should have been roasted long ago," he remarked, and then spat in the fire.

"Nothing for nothing," Tros answered. "Give him your protection."

Caswallon laid his face between his hands, sighed and looked up again.

"I gave Marius protection," he said gloomily. "We waste time. What can Eough say? Oh, well, what does it matter? One rascal more or less, Ludd's mud! This is a mad night! Speak," he said, frowning at the dwarf. "I protect you in coming and going, in house and holding, so you break no common law."

"I witness!" Tros exclaimed.

"I witness!" echoed Orwic. Orwic grinned, he was enjoying it.

The expression of Eough's face hardly changed, although his eyes seemed to hint at laughter.

"Sorcery is against your common law, and you call me a sorcerer," he answered. "If I tell you what I know, you will have me burned, so I will tell you what the charcoal-burners told me. That is not sorcery, is it? Are they sorcerers?"

"Speak!" Caswallon exploded irritably. "I protect you if you speak, not otherwise. Have you the spear ready, Orwic?"

Before Orwic could answer or move, the dwarf had sprung for the small, square window and had vanished through it.

"I don't trust kings! I will tell Tros what I know. He kept his word about the fish oil. Let him come out here," he called from outer darkness.

So Tros gathered the cloak around him and strode out into the night, stumbling over tree roots, feeling his way clumsily, his eyes bewildered by the darkness after firelight. The dwarf took him by the hand and pulled him in great haste, warning him when to duck the branches, until they reached a rock and a tangle of brambles that protruded through frozen snow.

Down under the rock they went into a cavern that reeked of fish, and there they sat on empty barrels when Eough had lighted and trimmed a lamp wick, Tros cursing the cold and the stench, while his eyes tried to pierce the shadows in search of the sulphur his heart desired.

"Now," he said, when the dwarf climbed a barrel and faced him, "call it sorcery or call it charcoal-burners' gossip, but tell me what you know about the Lady Fflur and my wife."

"Why not call it truth?" the dwarf suggested. "Don't you propose to believe me?"

"Truth then. Go ahead, but tell it."

"Weeks, weeks, weeks, weeks, weeks—five weeks. Three Romans. Two-and-twenty men from Murchan, king of Gwasgwyn*. A small ship at the south end of the Isle of Thanet. Gauls and Romans all dressed alike, Romans pretending to be Gauls. Can't fool me, though. Can't fool the charcoal-burners. Two-score Gauls and Romans waiting in the ship. Watch changed every hour or two. Five-and-twenty, getting very hungry, lurking on the downs by Merrow Pool, stealing sheep. Much trouble with the sheepdogs, frightening the shepherds off with sheets tied to a pole. Marius the Roman's barber staying at the gatehouse by Ludd's Bridge; one Gaul brings him messages; he tells Marius when he shaves him in the morning. The king's wife, your wife, eight slave-women, two other women, Marius, Galba, charioteers and ten-man escort—all off to the king's farm near-by Merrow. Simple enough. Ship waiting, not too far. Charioteers dead. Four escort dead. Others tied,

*The modern Gascony.

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taken along. All worth money over there in Gaul."

"Has the ship gone?" Tros demanded.

"Wind's good," Eough suggested, and Tros swore savagely. The wind had backed to the Northeast two or three hours ago. It would be blowing a three-reef gale by morning.

"Why didn't you tell me all this before?" Tros asked him.

"Why should I?" Eough retorted, and Tros nodded grimly.

There had been no reason why an outlawed man should run with information to a king who only tolerated him because the Druids had suggested tolerance. There was no real reason why he himself should expect favors from the dwarf. Yet they had struck up friendship on a fish-oil bargain basis, and he had learned to value the dwarf's judgment as well as his knowledge of alchemy and an almost superhuman skill in sifting news.

"You and I have been good friends," he said, watching the dwarf's eyes by the light of the flickering wick.

"Nothing for nothing!" the dwarf retorted, quoting him against himself.

He was reading Tros's eyes quite as sharply as Tros could read his.

"Certainly," said Tros, "but there are some things a man can't pay for in one life."

"Oh, you know that?" said the dwarf. "Where did you learn wisdom?"

"I am on my way to Gaul to recover my wife and the Lady Fflur from Cæsar's hands," said Tros. "Will you come with me and bring about fifty charcoal-burners?"

"Oh!" the dwarf exploded. "Oh! Who ever heard the like of that!"

He rolled sideways off the barrel in a paroxysm of almost inaudible laughter.

Suddenly he rested his chin on the barrel and peered into Tros' eyes.

"Charcoal-burners! Me! What impudence! Who ever heard the like of it! Why yes, we'll come!"

"I will pay you."

"Na-na-nah! No bargains!" said the dwarf, pointing his crooked finger at Tros's face. "You go for what you want. I go for what I want. You find the ship and the food. I find the charcoal-burners."

Tros began to hesitate. The dwarf's consent was too quick not to imply trickery. His unwillingness to stipulate for payment, too, was so unlike his usual method as to arouse suspicion that he had some method in mind of paying himself handsomely. But outside Caswallon and Orwic were filling the night with howls and shouts to Tros to hurry.

"Can I bring a hundred men and all their women?" the dwarf asked.

"Bring as many as I can crowd into the longship, not one more," Tros answered. "Bring them to the shipyard now. No waiting. I won't wait one tide for them. And bring sulphur, all you have."

"Tros! Tros! Tro-o-os! Where are you, Tros!"

Tros found his way out of the cave, but the dwarf lingered. The wolf came and clicked jaws a yard behind Tros's heels as he followed the sound of the voices. Caswallon and Orwic had wandered away from the cabin in search of him. They crashed among brambles and snow-covered roots, cursing Eough and sorcery and all that forest.

When Tros found them the three together found their way back to the chariot more by the sound of Skell's voice than by eyesight. Eough—speaking in grunts to Skell—was on his knees in front of the horses, rubbing something on their legs that stank like rotten fish but, judging from the way they held their ears, appeared already to have eased them. It might have been sulphur and fish-oil and something else, a smell Tros did not recognize.

"A mad night and a mad waste of time!" Caswallon snorted.

For a minute Tros did not answer. He was figuring in terms of ebb and flow.

"Two tides and we are on our way to Gaul, that is, if you dare!" he said at last.

"After such a night as this I dare all ——!" Caswallon growled.

CHAPTER IX

EOUGH APPLIES ALCHEMY

BEACONS, warning every man of fighting age to rally toward Lunden, blazed on hilltops, growing pale against the dawn as they neared the shipyard, where Caswallon set Tros down. He and Skell walked the last quarter-mile of the distance.

"You are half a free man," Tros remarked to him. "One more such service and I will

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try to forget old treacheries. Nevertheless, you have not yet told the whole of it. I hate a man who goes half distances, brave one minute, afraid for his skin the next. You have until we reach the shipyard to discover to me whether you are my man, truly or a mere scared, lower benchman, straining at the oar for better food and less whip. Mind you, I can smell a lie three leagues away!"

Skell eyed him sidewise as Tros, pretending not to see, was perfectly aware.

"Lord Tros," he said awkwardly, his breath coming in startled puffs on the frosty air, "a slave who was born free must make the most of any chance to bargain for his freedom back again."

Tros spun on his heel and shoved him by the shoulders so that they faced each other.

"You poor, miserable ——, I will make no bargains!" he retorted. "Master and slave, Druid and layman, king and subject, it is even so aboard ship. If a captain lets a crew drive bargains, then the crew is without a captain, slave without a master! Your duty is to me. My duty to use judgment. I will do mine. Do you yours or suffer for it!"

Still Skell hesitated. Mightily he feared Tros. More than he had ever loved a human being, almost, that is, he felt affection for him. But he had too long trafficked in treachery, too highly valued his own volatile adroitness to surrender an advantage without stipulations.

"You said half free?" he asked. "I served you well tonight. I nearly killed myself."

"Maybe better dead than half dead!" Tros retorted, laying a hand on his sword-hilt. "Mine to give, and mine to take away! You are no longer half free! Now speak. Say what you know."

Skell sighed and shrugged his shoulders. "There is not much satisfaction in serving a man who ——"

"There is satisfaction to me in being served well!" Tros interrupted, cutting him short. "There is none in being played with fast and loose! You have while I count ten."

Skell's eyes betrayed that he did not know what would happen when the count of ten was finished. It was what he did not know that conquered him. Given a certainty, his mind would have started instantly devising schemes to take advantage of it. He had known Tros long enough to know he would not kill a man merely for disobedience, but he also knew he was a man of swift expedients.

"I was afraid to tell you," he stammered. "You have accused me before this of treachery. You might do it again. I asked Eough. He said to go ahead and tell you. So I made up my mind to bargain for my freedom."

Tros was silent, stern-lipped.

"It was Galba—" Tros grinned savagely—"Galba in the shipyard, under the lee of the sawingshed, hinted there might be an incident, and opportunity thereafter for a man of tact to do himself some good. He said if a certain person should be missing, I would do well afterward to speak to you about it. He said I should tell you then that you can have the person back by coming to Gaul and making profitable terms with Cæsar."

"Did he name the person who might disappear?" Tros demanded.

"No."

"When did this conversation take place?"

"In the afternoon two days before you left for Verulam. One day after it was known that you would go to Verulam."

"And you, you dog! You never thought of warning me?"

They were not far from the shipyard. Tros drew a silver whistle from his breast and blew three peculiar, sharp blasts on it. There was instant noise and movement. The gate slammed. Conops came running, with two Northmen behind him, all three breathless, slipping and stumbling through the shallow snowdrifts.

"Put Skell in irons!" said Tros. "Fetter him hand and leg. Short rations. Let him have no speech with any one."

They stared, for the news had gone through all the shipyard that Skell was lucky to have been chosen midnight messenger. However, they seized him, asked no questions, hurried him away. Tros strode to the gate alone and stood there until Sigurdsen came, still pulling on his clothes.

"Sigurdsen, launch the longship! Don't tell me she's frozen on the mud, I know it! Work her loose! Boil water, soften the mud with hot fish oil, anything. Have her ready for sea tonight! Steady now! Mark this—if you as much as whisper that it can't be done I'll find me a new lieutenant! Put

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stores aboard for a hundred men for one week. Set fifty Britons at once to spreading pitch on her from stem to stern.

"Fill one of the waterbutts with charcoal. Put aboard twice as much rope as you think we'll need. Take one of the bronze anchors from the new ship and secure it close to the mast where we can use the halyards to get it overboard. Bows and arrows, swords for forty men, shields, axes. Leave the rest to me. Report to me when the ship's afloat."

Tros went in search of the slave-girl who had brought the news. She had heard his whistle and was already cooking breakfast for him, weeping beside the hearth, tears dripping in the sizzling bacon.

"You are free!" Tros informed her by way of greeting. "I will give you the document. Now, now! No slavering! Get up! Put the food on the table and talk while I eat. Stop crying or I won't hire you."

The night's ride had sharpened his appetite. He ate enormously, listening with grunted comments and curt questions to the woman's half hysterical account.

"By the River Wey we waited while they watered the horses. The Lord Galba was amusing the company on the river bank, singing a song about his own country. But the Lord Marius sat horseback on a high mound, and I saw him take his helmet off and wave it. Then men who looked like Gauls—but some of them shouted in the Roman tongue—came running out of ambush and cut off those of the escort who had not yet crossed the river.

"The Lady Fflur jumped into a chariot, but two men seized the horses' heads, although she beat them with the whip. There was fighting and men slain. The Lady Helma cried to me to hide and then run for help. I jumped into the water where there was ice among the rushes. I couldn't see much. I was half frozen and afraid to move. Two men came and searched for me, talking Roman to each other, but they could not wait long, and presently I saw them ride away eastward, following the others.

"Then I ran until I found a farmhouse where the man said I was a runaway slave and wished to hold me for the reward. But I persuaded him, and he took two horses, setting me on one. So we rode to Lunden, crying alarm to the few whom we met on the way. But they laughed at us, and we had no time to stop and explain. I came straight to Sigurdsen, and he sent Skell."

"Well, you are free," said Tros, "and I will hire you for a wage to be the Lady Helma's servant, so that you may earn yourself a dowry and become an honest woman."

HE STRODE out into the shipyard, where all was already bustle and confusion. Shouts and an oily stench from where the longship lay, announced that Sigurdsen had gone to work. There was a crackling of wood under the cauldrons where the Britons were heating pitch, and some of the Northmen were rigging tackles by the waterside and passing ropes to a mooring in midriver to help launch the longship as soon as the mud was thawed.

Tros visited the biggest storeshed, calling to Conops to come and unlock it, then summoning a dozen Britons to follow him inside. He made them fill one barrel full of the yellowish crystals he had dug from beneath Caswallon's stable. That and twenty of the round lead balls he had made for ammunition for the catapults, he ordered rolled outside into the yard.

"The Druids," he said to Conops, "are full of wisdom in the ways of peace. But for making war against Cæsar, with only one ship and a hundred men, sorcery seems better. When Eough comes, let me know."

He was still greatly puzzled about Eough; half feared the dwarf would not come after all, although hitherto he had always kept his promises and had even made the charcoal-burners keep theirs. He wondered why Eough should wish to go to Gaul and take a hundred charcoal-burners with him, women too. It was a mystery, he decided, and it was a part of his philosophy that the mysterious evolves into the beneficial.

He could crowd two hundred into the longship in addition to his Northmen to man the oars and the yards and braces, although it would be tight quarters. He suspected a hundred woodsmen, used to outlawry and self-concealment, would be better against Cæsar than a thousand of Gwanar's men, provided only he could manage them, which he might do with Eough's help. Whereas, not Gwanar himself, still less Caswallon, would be likely to keep control of a thousand Iceni and perhaps as many Trinobantes even, supposing it were possible to land them on the coast of Gaul.

"Little man," he said to Conops, "I

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shall need you ten times over. Yet you shall stay here and guard my half-built ship. Ten of those hot stinkballs go with me. Ten are for you to keep. When Eough comes with the sulphur we will mix the charge for them. Roll me out a barrel of that resin. Set it near the other barrel, so. Eough shall appoint you lord high second sorcerer. I give you command over the shipyard, to guard it in my absence. He gives you command over the dark powers of the underworld, in proof of which, when the longship sails, you shall let off one hot stinkball, taking care to keep up-wind of it.

"After that, I think, those Britons I must leave behind will be afraid to disobey you. And there won't come too many visitors to steal the fittings. I will leave you enough money to buy food with, but buy only a little at a time. Buy hand-to-mouth, and let the slaves know you are doing that. So you can refuse to buy at all and they can all go hungry if you have any trouble with them. Glendwyr I will take with me. That hot-blood might kill you otherwise."

Conops grinned sourly. "What have I done that you should leave me?" he demanded.

"You have done well," Tros retorted. "The reward of doing well is a more severe task, always. Attend to this one properly, and I may send you to Cæsar next, lone-handed, to cut his ears off!"

"Master, master! Let that woman Helma go her way!" Conops urged, his one eye gleaming jealously. "You and I are not made for marrying. Let Cæsar have her. No luck, so long as we are tied to a woman's skirt! One trouble on the last one's heels. Follow my way and have a new woman in every port you come to, like a ship tied to a mooring, that can let go when her captain pleases.

He stopped because Tros was grinning at him, more than because Tros' fist was raised. But he ducked the fist, nevertheless.

"If you had two eyes, my little man, I'd knock one out for you!" said Tros.

But though he stopped to pick up a lump of wood and made believe to throw it, Conops stayed within range.

"Master, I'm right and you know it! Look at this now! A wonder ship but half built, and a woman."

Tros hove the lump of wood, purposely missed him by an inch or two, laughed and walked away toward where Sigurdsen was brewing agonizing stenches, scalding the legs of men who did not get out of the way in time and nigh breaking the backs of others who hauled on anchored tackles at the word of command. Tros watched, observed that the pitch was very nearly spread on the ship's undersides from mud to waterline—for that job went swiftly with fifty men—and ordered a sheerlegs carried up, three tree trunks set up tripod fashion with a great bronze block hung from the summit.

"You'll break her back," warned Sigurdsen. But Tros preferred the risk of that to any more delay.

They passed the tackle to a capstan fifty feet away. Twenty men on the capstan put strain on a sling under the ship's bow, easing the ship's weight off the thawed ooze and, at a blow of the whistle, all tackles worked together. The ship did not budge, although dry timbers creaked and a tackle broke with a noise like one of Tros' new catapults. Sigurdsen assumed a told-you-so expression. But Tros doubled the crew on the sheerlegs, tried again and, at the next attempt, the longship slid into the river.

"Now she will leak like a sieve!" said Sigurdsen. "There's no pitch on her bottom."

"Pitch her inside then! Slap it on thick and throw sawdust on it. We sail tonight!"

There were a thousand things to see to, not least the new half-finished ship that must be covered and protected in all ways possible. Tros went up to examine the new deck that Sigurdsen had started laying in his absence, and presently gave an order that nearly broke his heart. He made them bring the newly finished linen sails out of the sailshed and spread them tent-fashion over the ship's gaping waist, with loose boards under them.

"THEY'LL be ruined," he muttered, "ruined!"

But it had to be.

And then Caswallon, fresh from a council meeting, wanting to be comforted.

"Ludd rot them! They will offer gold for Fflur. They bid me send a messenger to Cæsar and demand what price he asks, and to tell you to do the same for Helma. My Lundeners will pay Fflur's ransom but not your wife's. Pursuit? Aye, three thousand men turned out, and they've hung a dozen of my shepherds for not reporting

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that Romans were lurking near Merrow. About a hundred men reached Thanet in time to see the Romans' ship put to sea in a gale. What shall I do, Tros? Ludd o' Lunden, what a helpless cockerel a king is, if his men won't fight! Will you take my message to Cæsar for me!"

"No," said Tros, stroking his beard thoughtfully as he leaned back against an oaken prop that supported the great ship's hull. "But if you can send a messenger to Gaul, who will start a rumor that you will sail a week or two from now to have at Cæsar with ten or fifteen thousand men, do that by all means."

Caswallon laid a blue-veined white hand on his shoulder.

"Brother Tros, we must pay Cæsar's price! My council say they will not feed Gwanar's men, nor do they want Iceni quartering themselves in our towns. They offer gold for Fflur's ransom, and beyond that nothing. They loved Taliesan. They are thinking only of his funeral."

"How much do they love you?" Tros inquired.

Caswallon hesitated how to answer that. Tros continued his line of thought:

"If you should be a prisoner in Gaul or should be slain in Gaul, how deeply would it stir them?"

"I don't know," Caswallon answered. "But I think that in the spring they might send an expedition."

Tros laughed. "Buy back your wife from Cæsar with your subjects' money. Supposing that Cæsar would sell, which I doubt, though he loves gold. Or sail with me! I sail tonight. Either I win back Fflur and Helma or I die."

Caswallon's eyes gleamed.

"My son is too young to act as regent," he said, "but my cousin Orwic——"

"Tonight's tide!" Tros said with deliberate emphasis. "Get that messenger to Gaul if you can do it. Have him say that every fishing ship in Britain is being prepared to go to sea."

Caswallon drove away for further wrangling with his council, promising, if nothing else, to send that messenger. Tros went on working like Force incarnate to make the shipyard safe, and to provide sufficient plain, hard labor to keep his Britons out of mischief during his absence. He did not much care whether Caswallon should elect to come with him or not.

It was nearly nightfall when at last Eough came. It was a strange procession that he led. Two hundred men and women, fifty children, clothed in skins, all carrying wicker baskets in which their miserably insufficient household goods were packed, trailed behind Eough like a flexible long monster snaking through the shadows. Those in front carried bags of sulphur in addition to their baskets. All, even the women and children, had rough knives. They reeked of fish oil, as if they had used up all Eough's treasure on their skins before they came away. Eough's wolf ran in and out among their legs like a shuttle weaving an interminable pattern.

Tros observed them from the poop of his half-finished ship, wondering more than ever what their willingness to go to Gaul in wintertime might mean. He had promised them no reward, had offered no inducement beyond that one proposal made to Eough. There was something more than melancholy; there was a determined, almost a religious air to their procession. They resembled ants that he had seen in warmer climes, migrating from abandoned nests.

Conops, staring distrustfully, admitted them through the gate, but though he gave them no direction, they seemed to know exactly what to do. They filed toward the middle of the yard where they squatted densely around Eough who stood in the rough circle in their midst. He began talking to them, but his words were intended for them and none else; his head and hand moved in gestures of emphatic speech, but not even the sound of his voice reached Tros.

They made no answering murmur to the dwarf's remarks, but sat quite still and listened to them.

Tros sent them dried fish, carrots and cracked wheat. They devoured the food, not eagerly, not even with a display of interest, continuing to listen to Eough's speech. As gloaming deepened they began to resemble ghosts attending a voiceless oracle.

"They make me think of rats that leave a ship," Tros muttered.

The thought made him shudder. Was he himself a rat, deserting his own half-finished wondership? Was Caswallon a rat, deserting Britain? Was Britain doomed?

Presently he called Eough over to where the barrels stood, bidding him bring sulphur.

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"Mix!" he commanded.

Eough pounded the sulphur and charcoal separately, then mixed a quantity of each with powdered resin and oak sawdust, adding the yellow crystals afterwards. Tros took about a spoonful of the mixture and ignited it in a far corner of the yard. It spluttered as it burned. The stench nearly choked him and the heat, from even that small quantity, was almost incredible. When he returned he found Eough wetting down the sawdust.

"Try again," said Eough.

The stuff was harder to ignite, but jumped and scattered as it burned, making a worse stench than ever. Satisfied, Tros filled up one of the leaden balls with the preparation and inserted an oil-soaked fuse into the hole. Then he filled the remaining nine lead balls in the same way, stowed those where Conops could find them in emergency and ordered the rest of the sulphur, resin, charcoal and yellow crystals carried on board the longship.

CHAPTER X

THE START OF THE MAD ADVENTURE.

IT WAS bitter cold that night, with a bright half moon and no more east wind than sufficed to stir a ripple on the surface of the river. Caswallon came near midnight, swathed in furs, accompanied by two of his relations and one serving man, with enough weapons between them to have furnished three times their number.

Nearly all Lunden turned out to see Caswallon off, most of them wishing him Druids' blessings on his venture, all of them pleased that he was running his own risk instead of taxing them to ransom Fflur, but some of them crying farewell to him as if he were sailing on his last adventure. His oldest son, yet hardly old enough to use men's weapons, clung to him, begging and pleading to be taken on the expedition.

"Nay, my son, and for the last time!" Caswallon answered. "Stay here and obey Orwic. Study how to king it in my shoes if I should die over there in Gaul."

Then Eough, under a beacon flare, with cries and weird ceremony, investing Conops with underworld powers with which to guard the yard while Tros was absent; Caswallon adjuring his people to let the yard alone; Eough in person carrying the leaden ball into the middle of the yard, dancing around it, chanting incantation; Conops, torch in hand, as scared as any one.

Conops lit the fuse and hid behind a pile of timber in great haste, although Tros had told him to withdraw with dignity. There was a splutter, a great gasp from the assembled crowd, and then, what had not been foreseen, an explosion. The bomb burst like a thunder-clap, its stenching contents scattering far and wide. It started three fires in the wood-piles, that had to be doused with earth and snow by terrified British slaves, and the stench, even out in the open yard, was suffocating, almost unendurable. The crowd vanished, most of them pursuing runaway horses.

"Brother Tros, I fear this," Caswallon announced. His face was ashen-gray. "Do we journey in league with all the underworld?"

"No farther under than the bottom of the horse dung in the cave beneath your stables," Tros replied. "I never guessed that stuff would burst. Did you send that messenger to Gaul?"

"He leaves Lunden tonight by chariot to Pevensey, thence in the ship of Lomar, the tin merchant, who put in for repairs three months ago on his way from Vectis and frets to reach Gaul, where he can sell his cargo to the Romans."

Tros laughed.

"Let's hope he didn't see the hot stink burst. I'd rather he'd hear of it. They'll magnify the story. He'll multiply it in his head all the way between here and Gaul. By the time it reaches Cæsar there'll be talk of fifty thousand men on the way, all armed with the guts of earthquakes and the foul breath of Cocytus!"

Caswallon murmured, but the thought of Fflur had him by the heartstrings. He was raised on ancient legend. High romance and derring-do were of the breath he breathed. Knight-errantry, however little practised, lingered in the veins of every well-bred man in Britain, that and a sort of fatalism linked to faith in trial by ordeal. He proposed to confront Cæsar, challenge him in person. He had no other plan, left all else to the Powers of the Unseen Universe that, he believed, took a deeply personal interest in the affairs of men.

It was a mad adventure—only the wan moonlight on the Thames to help them clear the mud-banks, Northmen at the oars,

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chanting a low dirge about the fights of Odin, all the ship's waist stinking with the crowd of charcoal-burners soaked in fish oil, and only Tros at the helm with any notion what the plan might be.

And even Tros had hardly any plan at all. He only knew the half moon promised him fine weather, and remembered that his father on his death-bed, prophesied a long life for him on many lands and seas, with many a brush with Cæsar, that should end in his becoming Cæsar's more or less ally at last. As he believed in death-bed prophecies, so he believed in giving prophecy an opportunity to work.

"I undertake an enterprise of hazard, knowing a man can not die until his time comes," he assured Caswallon. "My time to die is not yet. Therefore I can not fail if I go forward."

Forward he went, down-Thames on the top of the tide, too busy admiring the long-ship's motion and her easy steering to let conjecture worry him. He had the gift of letting the past go, living with all his faculties in each existing moment.

"The future," he said to Caswallon, "is the past reshuffled. Who were the Gauls who helped the Romans carry off our wives?"

"The men of Murchan, king of Gwasgwyn who shall die, as I live!" Caswallon answered.

"I remember, Eough said it."

Eough was at the masthead, watching stars, and nothing could persuade him to come down, despite the cold and though Tros shouted to him a dozen times that he could see the stars as well from the after deck. When he did come down at last, Tros gave the steering oar to Sigurdsen and followed Eough forward to where the graceful bow began its upward curve toward the high serpent figurehead. There he cornered him.

"What have you seen?"

Eough shrugged his shoulders. No speech reveals an artist's inner thought, and there were no words to tell what Eough had seen. The shrug was helpless.

"Good or bad?" Tros asked.

"Some won't like it, but you can't change it," Eough retorted.

"For me, success or failure?" Tros asked.

"That depends on you," said Eough.

"For you, then—what?"

"Depends on me," Eough answered.

Suddenly Tros felt afraid, not of the dwarf but of the dwarf's intentions. Eough sensed it.

"We will pay our fare. We are honest people," he said, blinking, nodding, rubbing his legs to warm them.

"You mean your fare to Gaul?"

Eough nodded again.

"You will do my bidding?"

More nods, three in swift succession.

"Why did you wish to go to Gaul?"

"Britain is no more good for us. Taliesan is dead. There will be war. We get behind the war, to the place whence it comes. In the front of the war where the swords clash and the horsemen hunt men for the sake of killing, it is not good for charcoal-burners."

"Then you won't return to Britain?"

Eough laughed on a high note like a small boy.

"Does a chicken return into the egg?" he asked.

TROS made his first mistake then. He returned to the stern of the ship and took Caswallon into confidence.

"Migration," he announced, "like birds that fly south for the winter, only these birds won't return. You'll have to find new charcoal-burners around Lunden."

For a minute or two Caswallon refused flatly to believe him. As the truth began to filter through the crust of his autocracy, almost his very reason wavered. Rage burned into a frenzy.

"Throw them overboard!" he exploded, gulping. "Ludd's liver! The ungrateful, treacherous dogs! Leave Britain, and without our leave? Bid your Northmen gut them! Swine! They have lived in our forests, and we let them live, not even burning their beastly sorcerer, as we should have, but for Taliesan! This comes of taking reptiles with us in place of honest men. Here——"

Tros had to restrain him forcibly. He would have leaped into the ship's waist, sword in hand. He wanted to wreak murder on unnatural ingrates. Not that he had ever loved them or rejoiced in them as fellow countrymen. Far might that be from him! They were not even tax-payers. The point was, they had no right to go and ought to be killed for wanting to. They were vermin, godless sorcerers and insolent, ungrateful swine.

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He came near to fighting Tros, because Tros dared to protect them.

"I have a plan by which we can succeed with charcoal-burners better than with all your armed men," Tros explained. "These people have been hunted for generations. They are adepts at concealment. They will not be noticed. None will suspect them. They will be grateful to me for taking them to Gaul, and to you, too, if you'll only let them."

But Caswallon would hear none of it.

"You will next ask me to be grateful to those swine!" he thundered.

Nothing calmed him until the tide turned and the ground swell, aftermath of days of storm, pitched and rocked the longship until the rising sun danced like a drunken partner to the figurehead. The King of all the Trinobantes lay down then and vomited his spleen among the lazy, laughing waves.

"Am I a fish?" he groaned. "O Ludd! O mother of my sons, that you should have brought me to this pass! Tros, brother Tros, I die. Whoooo-up! waw-hu-ep-ah! Bear me a last message to my wife. O Fflur—eeyuerup—Ca-Caswallon dared the sea for love of you and—whooerreeup!"

Eough massaged him until the blood returned to head, hands, feet and vertigo departed. Caswallon threatened the dwarf with death for touching him, but Eough persisted and Caswallon's own attendants were too sick to interfere. At last the dwarf contrived a fearsome draught of fish oil mixed with onion juice and made Caswallon swallow it, forcing his jaws apart with iron fingers, rolling him over on his back and holding his nose until the mess was down. Caswallon retched and gurgled, but the sickness ceased.

Before long he was sitting up and swearing like a gentleman, rinsing his mouth with sea water to change the taste, and presently demanding food. Eough cooked it, using charcoal in a sand box forward. And whether the roe venison was hung exactly long enough, or whether Eough wrought miracles of cooking, Caswallon voted it the best food he had eaten in a dozen years.

"You dog of a —— sorcerer!" he roared. "If shame didn't forbid, I could forgive you!"

But Eough, sure of Tros' protection, cared not at all for kings and went forward to mix ground sulphur with the crystals, charcoal and resin with the sawdust, damping the lot with sea water and then filling the ten leaden bombs. But he did not insert the fuses yet. He seemed to have a cautious reverence for the offspring of his alchemy, which profoundly impressed the whole ship's company.

Not long after dawn there came a light wind, biting cold but favorable, and Tros set sail. Then, having set a course "with the wind under the lobe of your left ear," he gave the steering oar to Sigurdsen and lay down to sleep on a pile of sheepskins. But Caswallon was in no mood for sleep and insisted on asking questions.

"I will tell you whither we go when the gods tell me! I will sleep on it," Tros answered irritably.

But Caswallon did not believe in that kind of divination, any more than Tros believed in discussing plans that were as yet but half formed in his mind. They had to compromise, each having half his way, the plan not outlined, but the problem definitely stated.

"I know Cæsar," Tros began. He always began discussions of Cæsar that way. "He does his dirty work by proxy. If it succeeds, he takes the credit; if it fails, he blames his agent. They were the men of Murchan, king of Gwasgyn who carried off our wives. They will not go to Caritia where Cæsar may be, but will return with their prisoners to Gwasgyn, where Cæsar will presently follow them, unless the gods prevent.

"But Gwasgyn is far distant on the western coast of Gaul, so this being winter time, two things are certain. They will not travel all that way by sea, because of risk of storms. Nor did they come all that distance by sea in the first place. Their ship came from some harbor on the northern coast of Gaul, and will return thither, whence they will proceed to Gwasgyn overland.

"It would be in keeping with Cæsar's character to pretend to rescue our two wives from Murchan's men as the party travels across country. Marius and Galba, you may be quite sure, will hurry to Cæsar's winter quarters by the shortest route, give him all the necessary information, and thereafter hold their tongues or say what Cæsar puts into their mouths.

"Now we are not so far behind that Roman ship. They put to sea in a gale, it is true, but with the tide against them. Later, the wind shifted to the southwest. Then it failed. This ship of ours sails half

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as fast again as anything the Romans have this side of the Gates of Hercules. If they should go as far as Seine mouth we might even overtake them, although that is too good to expect. They will make all haste. They will whip the oarsmen.

"I am hoping they will make for Seine mouth, and I think that likely because it would be an easy place for them to have obtained a fairly good ship and a Gaulish pilot who would know something of the course between there and Thanet. Cæsar has had hard work to find pilots who know the coast of Britain, but I know there was one such at Seine mouth because I myself had information from him last year.

"Calculating tides, the wind and one thing and another, I believe they can not reach Seine mouth much before tonight, near midnight. At any rate, I think they will not sail farther to the west than Seine mouth, and we may be fairly sure they will make some kind of signal before they reach whichever port they have in mind. That signal will be answered from the shore. If it is nighttime, we shall see the signals, a flare from the masthead, some sort of beacon on land. They will not see us, and I know the Seine mouth estuary. I can creep in unseen in the dark. Thereafter, leave it to the gods, who I think are our friends, not Cæsar's."

Tros curled himself among the sheepskins then and snored in answer to Caswallon's questions. Prods in the ribs took no effect. Apparently he did not hear demands for information as to what use charcoal-burners might be put to, and how he proposed to employ the murderous, hot stinkballs.

But when, after two or three hours, Caswallon himself lay down to sleep, Tros awoke as if by intuition and, after conning the ship's position, went up to the bow to talk with Eough. They talked for at least an hour in undertones, whereafter Tros lay down again and slept like a man without a trouble on his mind.

CHAPTER XI

THE LIBURNIAN

THE wintry wind blew fair for them that whole day long, and the Northmen slept in watches, resting to be ready for the oar work if the wind should fail. When the half moon rose, it fell calm—one of those rare, shimmering nights with stars like silver, when the tinkling sea resembled polished glass and the ice froze brittle on wet ropeends.

Eough went to the masthead. It was Eough who reported three bright beacons in a row, a mile or more inland, beyond the shadowy, low marshes. Seine-mouth estuary lay on the port bow, many miles away. The tide was slack—about to set against them, but also against the enemy, so be the the enemy were there. They had seen no glimpse of any ship, but Tros felt more than ever sure his guess was accurate.

"When I sleep, the gods instruct me," he assured Caswallon.

But Caswallon, stamping his feet on deck to keep warm, breaking ice from his mustache, was doubtful of that and of every other article of Tros's faith, until Eough cried out again from where he swayed a motionless small phantom, dark against the starlit sky.

"Two lights now on a ship's spar. One at either end!"

Caswallon saw them as the longship lurched over a silent swell.

"Out oars! Row!" he yelled excitedly. "Tros, get your hot stinkengines ready! Ludd! We have them! Luck o' Ludd o' Lunden! Row, you rascals!"

Distance was deceptive on that dark expanse of water. Tros took thought.

"They could hear oars," he warned. "They have thirty or forty fighting men. If we outrow them and throw the burning stink aboard, we might kill Fflur and Helma. Think, man, think! Don't waste breath."

But Caswallon could only think in terms of chariots and horses, of ambush and sudden swoops on a surprized foe. He cursed the wind that had failed them. He cursed the sea because he could not walk on it. He cursed Tros, because he could not race that Roman ship and ram her, pitch the burning stink into her hold and snatch the prisoners away before it sank with all its crew. He was for action, swift and resolute.

"The stinkballs would kill us as well as them," said Tros, taking the steering oar.

He knew those waters. Setting slow time for the oar-beats, husbanding the Northmen's strength, he set a course in-shore to where the tide would flow against him with less force.

And then the unexpected happened. He

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caught the sound of oars between him and the enemy.

He ordered silence—let the ship swing any way she pleased—climbed to the masthead and clung there beside Eough. Once, then again, he caught the flash of moonlight on an oar-blade, but the cold air filmed his eyes, and the ship's motion, added to the heaving of the moonlit waves, made vision difficult. It was a long time before he made out the hull of a long, low rowing boat.

"Liburnian," he muttered.

It was one of those fast boats the Romans used for harbor work and for taking messages to ships at sea, rowed by eight or a dozen men.

He watched with running eyes until the cold grew unendurable, then returned to deck.

"That might be Cæsar himself in that Liburnian," he said. "And if I knew it were I would take all chances."

Caswallon did not hesitate.

"I order you! Start the oars again!"

"Not so," Tros answered. "I am captain. You are king of a piece of Britain. I think they come for Marius and Galba, who will make all speed for the shore to convey their news to Cæsar. If we watch the Liburnian, we may learn where Cæsar is."

"Cæsar will be where those three lights are," said Caswallon, pointing shoreward toward Seine mouth.

"No," said Tros, "those are guide-lights, three in a line to show the channel."

"Make for them then! Get there first and block the channel."

"Can't be done," Tros answered. "Tide and a whiff of wind against us. Tide increasing. From the masthead I saw a light in motion, and I think there is a pilot coming out, but it may be one of Cæsar's warships."

He could no longer hear the Liburnian, so he lowered the sail and started the oars. Slowly at first, then faster he took the longship nearer shore, until he could discern the low cliffs dimly and could hear the pounding of the surf.

He took a sounding and dropped anchor.

"Now," he said, "if the gods are our friends, we may accomplish something. Cæsar's camp used to be yonder." He pointed. "A small camp, about two hundred infantry and fifty horsemen, near a place where cross-roads meet. The bigger camp lies yonder."

He pointed again, this time much farther to the westward.

"See. You can see the watchfires along the rampart. That bigger camp is outside the Gaul's town, maybe a mile away from it. Between that and us lie the harbor and the River Seine. When I was in Gaul, Cæsar hardly ever slept a night in the large camp because it is across the river, which delays the receipt of messages from other points. Except when he is on the march he likes a small camp best and not too many onlookers, not too many men who might report his doings. He has a theory, too, that the legions admire him more if they don't see him too often. It doesn't amuse him to be commonplace. Watch our charcoal-burners."

They were hanging overside, crowded against the landward rail, all as silent as ghosts. Caswallon swore aloud. It irked him to see men eager to leave Britain.

"Throw them overboard! See if they can swim!" he snorted.

BUT instead, Tros issued food to them, dried fish and roasted wheat in sufficient quantities to last for several days. Then he sent for young Glendwyr to come to the steering deck. Two Northmen brought him, so seasick he could hardly stand.

Caswallon pitied him. He seemed to bear no malice against a rebel taken in the act, defeated and enslaved, although he loathed the charcoal-burners who had never lifted hand against him.

"Come now, Glendwyr," he said kindly, "make me glad I did not hang you. Let me see you play the man."

"I would have hanged you, had rebellion not failed!" the youngster answered. "It would have been more merciful than slavery."

Tros cut that altercation short.

"Your chance!" he said sternly. "If you want your freedom, work for it. I charge no tenths, the way the Romans do.* Whoever serves me faithfully receives freedom, and I hire him thereafter as a free man. What do you say?"

"I am sick. I am fit for nothing," Glendwyr answered.

"So. That is when a man's true spirit shows itself. Sick as you are, do you propose to earn your freedom?"

"How?" asked Glendwyr.

"He is no good," said Caswallon.

*By Roman law a freed slave had to pay a tax to the state of a tenth of his market value.

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But Tros was not so sure. He tried again:

"Will you serve me while my back is turned?"

Once more Glendwyr hesitated. He eyed Tros and then Caswallon.

"I hate you both. Better kill me," he answered.

Tros laughed.

"Young fool, I need no leave of yours if I choose to kill you. You are my property. I offer you a man's chance to be your own man again."

"I crave freedom, but as a free man I will never serve you," Glendwyr answered.

"Never is a long time. We will cross that river when we reach it," said Tros. "Can you swim?"

Glendwyr nodded.

"Can you swim from here to shore? A long way, mind. The sea is like ice. Very well, I'll have two Britons rub you down with fish oil. Put oiled wool in your ears. Wait, I'll lower the boat and send you halfway to the shore. You swim the rest. Take food with you tied in a bladder. When morning comes, find out where they have taken the Lady Fflur and the Lady Helma. Bring a message from them back to me. You will have to search for me. I will not be standing on the highest point in sight."

"Very well," said Glendwyr. "But don't talk to me afterwards about faithful service and such balderdash. I serve myself. I have no love for you whatever."

"Nevertheless, remember this," said Tros. "You have owned a slave or two, young fellow, but you are new at the business of being one. No matter how much Cæsar is my enemy, nor how much the Gauls hate Cæsar, and even if I should be taken and crucified, you are a slave. One word from me and you would be proscribed and hunted down. You must return to me to receive your freedom. Nothing for nothing. I give freedom for honest service."

Glendwyr nodded. As a man whose father had owned slaves he understood the system. All freemen of whatever race were in league against the slave, and those who had themselves been manumitted were the worst of all. A runaway slave's sole hope of escaping crucifixion was to take to the mountains as an outlaw, or to enlist in some foreign mercenary army. But the latter was impossible where Rome held sway.

Tros ordered the rowboat put quietly overside, told off two charcoal-burners to rub Glendwyr, face and all, with oil and climbed once more to the masthead, where he remained for half an hour. When he returned to the deck he looked pleased, although his teeth were chattering.

"What like was Lomar's ship?" he asked. "He who carried tin and took your messenger?"

Caswallon described the ship as nearly as he could, but he could have described a horse much better.

"All the Vectis tinships carry an iron basket at the masthead, in which they burn towflares, that the ship may see the way by night, or for some such reason."

Tros chuckled.

"That is not a Roman warship coming out. Tide and wind must have carried Lomar from Pevensey to Seine mouth, where I suppose the Romans ordered him to make haste to Caritia. Now he is coming out of Seine mouth on a tide that will take him two-thirds of the way. Is Lomar any kind of friend of yours?"

"Aye, surely. Many times he has brought tin and traded it for wool in Lunden."

"Go borrow that iron basket from him then. Four Northmen shall row you. Put Glendwyr into the water half way between here and the shore, then row to meet Lomar's ship. Wait! Has he a figurehead?"

"No, his ship is a blunt-bowed thing, not nearly as long as this but, I should say, as high out of the water. No figurehead before or behind."

"Axes!" Tros commanded.

And almost before Caswallon had stepped overside into the rowboat with four Northmen all armed to the teeth, Sigurdsen and some others, grumbling superstitiously, were chopping off the long-necked serpents that adorned the longship's ends.

"Now we shall have no luck at all!" growled Sigurdsen. "As well top off a horse's head and tail!"

But Tros leaned overside and gave additional instructions to Caswallon:

"First and foremost, borrow that iron basket. Second, get all the news you can from Lomar. Third, try to persuade him to stand far out to sea, so that he will be out of sight by morning or else to anchor before morning in some land-locked cove where the Romans aren't likely to see him."

Caswallon was rowed away and again Tros climbed to the masthead. Presently in the wan light of the moon he caught sight of the

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liburnian returning shoreward. The light at Lomar's masthead had burned itself out, but beyond it two small lights at either end of a spar explained that another ship was laboring under oars, presumably trying to enter the channel against the tide.

Then came mist on a breath of warmer air. White cat-tails puffed along in streaks prophetic of a dense fog. Tros began to fear Caswallon might be lost, began to wonder whether he must burn a flare for him and risk all consequences.

SO AN hour passed. Once, he heard a distant crash that sounded not quite like a long wave bursting on the shingle. Long after that he heard the heavy thump of long sweeps and the squeak of a swaying spar as Lomar's ship went by. The mist increased, but with occasional puffs of wind that blew long sea-lanes, down which the moon shone brightly. Then oars again, the steady thump and swing of seamen born to the business, and presently Caswallon's hail out of a fog bank—

"Tro-o-o-o-s!"

He shouted back to give them the direction. Five more minutes and Caswallon came climbing up, wet to the skin. The Northmen followed, dragging up a huge iron basket.

"Ludd's luck!" Caswallon announced. "Give me dry clothes, Tros. We got Marius and Galba. Slew them both! Your Northmen are first rate fellows. Row? Ludd's backbone! We came full speed out of a bank of fog and crashed into the liburnian! Look at the boat's bow! Lucky you built her of oak or we'd be swimming yet! We upset the liburnian and Galba jumped aboard us. I hacked his neck through clear to the backbone, so he couldn't tell me much. Then Marius got both hands on the boat's edge and one of the Northmen helped him in.

"He knocked them overboard and rushed at me, so I had to stop him, point to the throat. He went over backward and vanished. Armor too heavy, I suppose. Then I had to pull the two Northmen out of the water. The fools can't swim! One of them pulled me in. By Ludd, I'm as wet as a fish. Liburnian's crew? Oh, the Northmen knocked them on the head with oars as they tried to swim. There'll be no tales told ashore! Gwendwyr? Yes, he left all right, swimming strong, blowing like a porpoise. Just before he jumped in he said he was sorry he'd insulted you. He asked me to say he would do his best and he wishes you Druid's luck.

Lomar? Yes, we tackled him after we scuttled the liburnian. Lomar put into Seine mouth, leaking badly, but he has sickness aboard, so the Romans sent him out again on the tide and told him to dump his sick men overboard out of sight of land. Lomar's as mad as a forked eel. He wants the money for his tin, but the Romans won't pay him until he takes it to Caritia and he's afraid his ship isn't seaworthy. He intends to put into a cove before morning and try to patch her up, but he says if the Romans catch him there, they'll chase him out to sea. So he'll have to be careful."

"How much tin has he?" asked Tros.

"As much as his ship can carry, stowed under a structure like a house-roof around the mast, not unlike the one we have on this ship. He set my messenger ashore before he left port. The man jumped overside and swam for it. And you were right, Tros. He's already talking about fifty thousand men. Lomar asked me whether it's true that the Druids have armed us with thunderbolts. I told him yes. Cæsar's ears will burn by morning!"

Tros ordered the iron basket hoisted to the masthead and fixed in place.

"Now we needn't worry," he said. "We're Lomar's ship. Was his hull pitch black?"

Caswallon nodded, pulling on warm, dry trousers that one of his own attendants offered, making shift himself with blankets out of Tros' store.

"Luck o' Ludd!" said Tros. "It looks like it. Lomar with a sick crew, the Romans will never venture near this ship. They'll never doubt we're Lomar. Mist, and no sign of wind. Plenty of time between now and morning. Sigurdsen!"

The giant Northman stood before him, arms folded on his breast.

"I never tempt a friend beyond his strength," said Tros. "This was your ship once. You shall come ashore with me. You and the four best men you have. Caswallon, will you leave your party on board here? Then we needn't be afraid that our Northmen will put to sea and leave us."

Sigurdsen scowled. Caswallon laughed.

"You doubt my faith?" asked Sigurdsen.

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"Not I," said Tros, "but I propose to test it like a new rope, not using too much strain at first. You, I, the Lord Caswallon and Eough for the shore. We will try to steal more boats to land the charcoal-burners. Put those stinkballs into the boat. Let Eough have charge of them."

CHAPTER XII

LUCK O' LUDD O' LUNDEN

THEY found three boats keels upward on the beach, but it took until dawn to land the charcoal-burners because the boats kept losing themselves in the fog between ship and land.

"The women. The children," Eough demanded when the last of his skin-clad men stood shivering on shore.

Tros grinned.

"They are no use to you yet," he answered. "Business first."

"I have never broken a promise," said the dwarf.

"Nor I," Tros answered. "You shall have those women and children when the work is done."

Eough shrugged his shoulders philosophically, but he did not like the idea of having to leave hostages in Tros' hands. He set the stinkballs higher up the beach and waited for further orders.

"Now remember," Tros advised him, "if the Romans see you they will make sport of you because you are small, and you will have a hard time to get away from them. Some dealer might even claim you as a slave. Or you might be kidnapped and smuggled away to Rome. Keep out of sight as much as possible. Choose your best man and send him to offer faggots for sale to the legionaries.

"They're the most improvident wastrels in the world with fuel. At the rate they were burning watchfires last night, no woodstack would last a week. They're certain purchasers. He'll find the quartermaster who does the purchasing in a building that faces the front entrance of the camp. Let him bargain a bit for appearance sake, but be sure he accepts finally whatever price is offered.

"The rest of you go to the woods you'll find in that direction—" he pointed southward — "glean faggots, and conceal the stinkballs in the largest ones. Then, when your man has done the bargaining, carry the faggots into the camp and stack them where the quartermaster shows you. Your men must return to the woods to sleep, but you report to me. Leave two of your men here. One of them will find you later on and tell you where I'm hidden. The other will find Glendwyr and tell him."

Eough concealed the stinkballs under heaps of seaweed in the charcoal-burners' baskets and departed into the fog, as businesslike as if he were leading a hundred slaves to market.

"Did he understand at which camp he is to offer wood for sale?" Caswallon asked.

"Yes, the smaller one, where Cæsar may be."

"What if Cæsar is not there?"

"What if the gods are not around us!" Tros retorted. "I never think in terms of 'what if not.' I look at what is. Let us do our part and trust the gods to do theirs. Observe this fog. Could the gods have dropped a better screen over our movements? I will believe the gods are neutral when I see it proved! We are hostages to luck. The gods love boldness. Forward!"

Nine of them, Tros leading and two wretched-looking charcoal-burners last, began to march inland, pausing frequently to listen for voices or footsteps, following a footpath but avoiding habitations, seeking high ground in order if possible to get above the mist.

They were discovered and barked at by dogs, but no harm came of it. And at one place where they crossed hoar-frosted grassland, three stray horses made them believe they had been detected by Cæsar's cavalry. Discovering the mistake, Caswallon would have caught one of those horses and ridden it, had Tros permitted; but horse theft was too likely to have started hue and cry.

Caswallon was still obsessed by the notion of finding Cæsar and challenging him to single combat. As simple as a child where chivalry concerned him, he was even nervous lest Tros should claim precedence and fight the Roman first. In vain Tros told him twenty times that Cæsar would consider himself too civilized for that kind of encounter.

"He murders by proxy at wholesale. He is brave in battle, but he would laugh at the idea of trial by ordeal."

"I have heard," Caswallon answered, "that the Romans are great fighters, hand-to-hand. Marius told me that even their

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public games are fights to the death in an arena between picked antagonists."

"Foreigners fighting, Romans looking on!" Tros answered. "Another of their pretty little games is watching prisoners torn by wild dogs. I tell you, if you should walk up and challenge Cæsar, he would simply have you put in chains and keep you to grace his triumph when he goes to Rome*."

Caswallon refused to believe it. Unwillingness to upset Tros' plan was all that prevented him from going there and then in search of Cæsar. And even so, if he had known how vague Tros' plan still was, he might have gone in any case. Tros was simply trusting in what Caswallon would have called, "Ludd's Luck."

They reached high ground at last and lay down behind a fallen tree to munch cold breakfast and wait for the mist to disperse. They could hear the tubas blow in Cæsar's camp, the occasional galloping footfall of a mounted messenger, shouting and the usual medley of camp noises, but they had little idea how close they were. When the fog did lift at last, leaving a light haze, they discovered they were hardly a quarter of a mile away. They could see Cæsar's tents—the little one he slept in, and the big one, sumptuously furnished, warmed with charcoal braziers, with the standards pitched in front of it, in which he lived by day.

There was no doubt, after they had watched for half an hour, that Cæsar was in the big tent. A constant stream of messengers came and went. Men who appeared to be important officers stood near the tent in groups, entering one by one as they were summoned. The camp was laid out spaciously and contained more wooden huts than tents. Bright fires were burning at each intersection of the lines, and at those groups of soldiers stood warming themselves; but most of the officers and men, not on actual duty, were pacing solemnly in twos along the rampart, or to and fro on the parade ground.

"How shall we reach Cæsar?" Caswallon grumbled.

But Tros was studying the woodstack, which, as he had guessed might be the case, was running low.

It was heaped about midway between Cæsar's tent and the rear camp entrance, and had a ragged, untidy look from having been extravagantly requisitioned the preceding night.

"We will stay here," said Tros. "This place serves perfectly."

In a low voice he gave his orders to the two charcoal-burners, having learned long since in dealings with them that the only way to make them even wish to understand him was to moderate his voice. They nodded and went off in different directions, one toward the woods to the southward, the other toward the harbor where Cæsar's new fleet was building and twenty or thirty ships, unrigged as yet, lay anchored.

SUDDENLY Tros gripped Caswallon's forearm.

"Hermes! That fellow Cæsar is a swift one! Look!" He pointed to where a long, white road ran nearly due south over the horizon. "That tale of ours of thunderbolts and fifty thousand men and an invasion worked! He takes precautions, whether or not he believes the news!"

The advance guard of a legion, mounted men with their helmets and covered shields swung over-shoulder, jogged over-hill, blurred by the haze, and there was infantry behind them. Men with ropes and pegs were already marking off at one end the lines for new ditch and ramparts, to enlarge the camp.

"Luck?" said Tros. "We have it all! This arriving legion will want fuel. They'll requisition most of Cæsar's small stack. Our charcoal-burners will find a ready market. They'll be heaping faggots all day long to replenish Cæsar's pile while the new legion's foragers pile up a heap of their own."

And so it happened. A fatigue party reduced the fuel stack by two-thirds its bulk, throwing it near the middle of the rectangle being marked out for the use of the arriving legion.

But presently the light haze cleared away before a breath of wind, and Tros changed his mind about the luck being all his. He felt a cold chill creeping down his spine, that had nothing to do with the frosty air. He could see far out to seaward. His jaw jerked forward and his amber eyes glared like an angry cat's.

"Fool!" he muttered. "Idiot! I might have known the sea was my sphere and the dry land Cæsar's!"

*Cæsar's commentaries for his own admission of how he treated Gaulish chiefs who presented themselves before him, relying on his supposed chivalry.

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He pointed. Almost out of sight to westward, the ship from which the libu.nian had carried Marius and Galba to their doom toiled against the tide along the coast.

"They put in to drop Marius and Galba! They mean to land the women somewhere nearer Gwasgyn! Zeus! Trust Cæsar to pretend to have nothing to do with the business until he can find some way of covering his own tracks! Ludd, Ludd, Ludd, Ludd! What now?"

"To our ship! Back to our ship! Caswallon urged instantly. "Up anchor. Give chase!"

For about ten breaths Tros thought of that. Then:

"No!" he said simply. "Can't desert Eough and the charcoal-burners."

"Phaugh!" Caswallon snorted. "Those swine?"

"They have our stinkballs."

"We have courage. Our wives are yonder!"

"If we stay here, young Glendwyr will get word to us."

"Of what we already know! Let Glendwyr rot! Come on, Tros! Back to the ship!"

"No!" said Tros.

"Ludd's blood, man! Why not?"

"Because the gods love men who do not change their plan at every setback. Because I can see Eough and his hundred bringing faggots from the woods. Also because if we should move our ship in the wrong direction, the Romans might suspect it is not Lomar's tin ship after all; and they can move by land much faster than we could row against the tide. Here we lie unsuspected. Let us see what happens."

"Lie here like a frozen dog while Fflur, the mother of my sons——"

Caswallon set his jaw and lapsed into angry silence, glancing at Tros from time to time as if he had begun to lose all confidence in his ally. But Tros watched Cæsar's camp and the legion, tramping down the long white road, singing, shields and helmets slung over their shoulders; wagons, war machines, camp followers* and women trailing in the rear.

After a while even Caswallon forgot impatience as he watched the marvel of a Roman legion making camp, the speed with which they dug the ditch and earth work, the total absence of confusion, the unhurried ease with which the tents and wooden huts were raised in regular, straight lines.

"If I could make my Britons work like that!"

"Then you would conquer all Britain! What good would it do you or the other tribes?" Tros answered. "Rome is a disease. She has no virtue except discipline."

Eough and his charcoal-burners made three trips from the forest, stacking their faggots hardly fifty yards away from Cæsar's tent, before the legion's foragers began to march away in parties to attend to that work themselves. Apparently the charcoal-burners were paid off. They returned to the forest but made no reappearance on the scene. The Roman foragers cut trees down, split the wood and stacked it around and about the charcoal-burner's pile, hauling some in wagons, some piled high on mules. By noon the heap was almost mountainous, and the last loads were delivered direct to the soldiers for the night's use, the wagons going the round of the rampart and cross-wise up and down the camp, dumping separate heaps at every intersection.

Then, a little after high noon, Cæsar himself in his scarlet cloak, emerged from the great tent to be fawned on by his generals and parade the camp awhile, pausing at intervals—a figure of dignified gesture—the crowd around him backing away as he swept with his right arm in the direction of whatever he discussed. Once he pointed straight at where Tros and Caswallon were concealed and for three minutes they lay with bated breath, forgetting how impossible it was that he should see them or know they were there.

Cæsar returned to his tent, and not long after that came Eough, boy-voiced, a trifle querulous, guided by that charcoal-burner who had gone in search of him. The Romans had not paid his men. The quartermaster had told them to return tomorrow for the handful of copper money due them. Eough was as disturbed about that as if it were Tros who had broken a promise to himself.

"That Roman intends to swindle my people," he complained.

Tros laughed and called him Xenophon, a jest that only aroused Eough's ire because he had no notion what it meant. He demanded the women and children.

*Calones and lixae. Calones were slaves who, from constant attendance on an army on the march, attained considerable skill in the management of baggage and in similar services. The lixae were free men who followed for purposes of trade, to buy loot and prisoners for the slave and gladiator market.

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"I have done my work. The stinkballs are under the woodpile with a fuse set into each, and each about a man's length distant from the other."

The dwarf stood arms akimbo, stomach out, pouting his lips, his bare toes clenching at the hard ground.

"Shall I curse you?" he suggested.

"Go and curse Cæsar!" Tros advised him. "Some one has to fire that woodpile between now and midnight. None but you can get into the camp and stay there after dark. They turn out all strangers at sunset. But, as I told you last night, Romans are mad about omens; Cæsar as mad as the rest.

"If you present yourself at the camp gate they will take you straight to Cæsar as a curiosity. If you tell Cæsar you can read the stars, he will order you to cast his horoscope. Tell him you must watch the stars alone, uninterfered with, and go and sit near the woodpile. But don't set fire to it until just after they have changed the watch, midway between sunset and midnight."

"I don't want to be sold and sent to Rome," the dwarf retorted. "I don't want to be crucified for burning woodpiles. I know Cæsar's horoscope already. He will die by the knife when his time comes. You can't kill him."

But Tros knew Eough's chief weakness, which, like any other man's, lay underneath his pride.

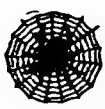
"You could obtain a big reward by going straight to Cæsar and betraying us," he suggested.

"Dung Heap Tros! Fish Oil Tros! When did you and I break promises?"

"Then go to Cæsar. Do as I bid you. Remember all I told you last night. I will set the women and children ashore before daylight if the woodpile burns."

Eough stuck out a tongue at him.

"I go," he said. "I do it. But I know your horoscope, too. Like Cæsar, when your time comes, you will die with iron in your belly."



EOUGH turned on his heel and walked away, making discontented noises with his teeth and tongue. Caswallon rose to his knees, loosening his sword from the scabbard.

"I go to kill that dwarf," he explained when Tros tried to restrain him. "He will sell us to Cæsar as surely as we lie here. Better please the gods by killing him now. You or I can creep into the camp and fire the woodpile."

"Kill me instead, if I shall judge wrongly," Tros answered. "That dwarf thinks more of his charcoal-burners than of you or me or Cæsar or all the money Cæsar could pay him. And more than that again, he values his own promise! He will do exactly what I have told him to. But if we should play him false thereafter, and not set those women and children ashore, I would not give a denarium for either of our lives. Eough is a keeper of bargains."

Mightily dissatisfied, Caswallon let Eough go, but a dozen times he changed his mind and wanted to send the Northmen after him to kill him before he could reach the camp. It was only because the Northmen refused point-blank that he at last subsided, growling to himself.

"It is not good to kill dwarfs," Sigurdsen explained. "That man is a cousin to the Zwergs and Trolls. He has the mind of seven men in the body of the seventh of one. Seven curses lie on whoever kills him."

Whether Sigurdsen made that up merely to support Tros or whether he believed it, he impressed Caswallon, who lay quiet until nearly sunset, watching the camp activities through mist that gradually settled into fog as night drew near. The fog rather worried Tros. Eough's story of sitting alone to watch the stars would hardly be likely to pass muster.

And then at sunset Glendwyr came, guided by the other charcoal-burner who had found him wandering along the seashore, looking for Tros where the boats were upturned on the beach. Glendwyr was brief.

"They were landed in the ship's boat on the far side of the river, and the ship has vanished westward. The Lady Fflur sends loving greetings to the Lord Caswallon. The Lady Helma has escaped."

"Zeus!" Tros sprang to his feet. "Where is she?"

"Come," was all Glendwyr said, and jerked his head in the direction of the sea.

They left Sigurdsen and his fellow Northmen lying there to watch Cæsar's camp, and followed Glendwyr through the thickening fog. He would have gone at a jog-trot, but Caswallon seized his arm, ignoring risk, questioning him loudly.

"What else said my wife? How was she?

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Have they treated her with courtesy? Where is she now?"

It was only when he tried to talk that it appeared how exhausted Glendwyr was. He was eager to finish his task before he dropped.

"In the larger camp beyond the river. Yes, she is well," he gasped.

It was Tros who detected blood, for Tros was following. There was an open wound on the back of Glendwyr's right thigh. He overtook him and felt it.

"Javelin," said Glendwyr. "Glancing blow. Not deep."

Tros swore under his breath as Glendwyr broke into a trot. Now the whole plan had gone skyward! It was brave of Helma to escape, but Pluto! They would inform Cæsar, there would be hue and cry, two thousand men would search like trained hounds, they would put out in boats and search the longship.

"We are done for now!" he muttered.

Down by the shore between three water-rounded rocks, not a hundred paces from the place where they had left the boats, lay Helma. Tros knelt and took her in his arms, but for a long time she could not speak to him, until the warmth of his body brought response at last, he lending her, as it were, a reflection of his own vitality. She was wet to the skin, but the back of her deerskin dress was drenched with blood and he could feel the broken-off end of an arrow protruding below her shoulder-blade.

Caswallon stood by, saying nothing, only he drew his sword and felt the edge of it with his left thumb. Glendwyr sat down with his back against a rock.

"Helma! Helma!" Tros kept repeating.

She spoke at last. He held his ear to her lips but there was no need. The spirit in her burned high like the last flame of an exhausted lamp and her voice had strength in it.

"Lord Tros, I grieve I may not bear your sons. Set Glendwyr free."

"Glendwyr!" said Tros, very loud, sparing one glance for him, "You are free!"

"He found us. We were in a hut outside the camp. But now they have taken Fflur inside. He whispered. Then—in the fog—I crept out to talk with him. Too many sentries. Farther away. Fog. And then—I thought of you—if I am killed, no need to fight for me—if I reach you, my proper place—father of my son, Lord Tros. But never now. We ran—and we ran. Glendwyr knew the way. Boat down by the river, but only a pole—no oars. Sentries running after us, and it took time to launch the boat. Arrow—and I lay in the boat. Glendwyr was hurt — something knocked him overboard and he lost the pole. He swam, guiding the boat. And then—when he called to me to help him in—I couldn't. Fog. Tide. We struck a sandbank. He lifted me out. I lay on the water. He dragged me. After that, I don't know, but I suppose he carried me to this place. O Tros, I grieve—press me closer, so. It is warm—I grieve your son might not be borne before I die."

She died in his arms as he knelt there, he saying to her what he had not known was in him to be said. When she had breathed her last he looked for Glendwyr, to repeat to him that he was free.

But Caswallon was talking to Glendwyr, binding a strip from his own good linen shirt on Glendwyr's thigh, talking, acting as toward an equal.

"Luck o' Ludd o' Lunden? I begin to doubt it! Ludd lives in the Thames. He doesn't care for us in Gaul! I had a good ally in Tros as long as his own wife was a prisoner, but——"

Tros cut that conversation short.

"Luck or none," he interrupted, "will you help me launch a boat?"

Through the fog, and in spite of the fog, Caswallon's face loomed savagely resigned.

"I will," he said, snapping his jaws tight.

"I will lay my wife aboard the ship," said Tros, "and leave Glendwyr there because of his wounds. Then we will return for your wife and to attend to it that Cæsar pays the bill."

Caswallon sighed, grinned and gripped Tros' shoulder:

"Brother Tros," he said. "I grieve, I did you wrong. I should have known you would see this through. It was Ludd's own luck when you and I made friends!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE GODS! THE GODS!

IN FOG so dense that they could hardly find the shore, so dense that when they did reach shore they lost themselves a dozen times, Tros and Caswallon found their way

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at last to where Sigurdsen and the Northmen waited. Sigurdsen reported that a search for Helma had begun. Roman soldiers, quartering the fog, calling to one another to keep touch, had almost stumbled on them.

"Helma is dead," Tros told him, expecting the news would arouse the shivering Northmen's fighting spirit. But Sigurdsen merely gloomed about it, and the other Northmen took his view of it.

"I said we would have no luck after we chopped down those figureheads. We will all be dead men presently," said Sigurdsen, fingering his ax.

Tros solved that problem Spartan army-fashion, as Leonidas once did the while his frozen handfull waited for the Persians in the high gap by Thermopylæ. He set them all to playing leap-frog, until the blood ran warmer in their veins and the solitary charcoal-burner who had guided Glendwyr, bolted because they looked like jumping goblins in the fog.

At last when all were breathless, and Caswallon had wrestled Sigurdsen until the giant lost his temper from having so much the worst of it, Tros raised both arms, adjuring gods whom neither Northmen nor Caswallon knew by name:

"Ye Guides! Ye Powers! Ye, whose thoughts enfold us! Ye, whom Father Zeus breathed forth! Uphold us!"

Forward then, blood tingling, to where the watchfires burned around the four-square rampart, blurred by the fog until they seemed a wall of crimson, decorated with the sentries' silhouettes. By the main gate there was a beacon brighter than the rest, whose flame danced on the guardhouse wall and on the figures of at least a dozen sentries.

The gate at the rear was almost equally well lighted, but those at the two sides, narrower and less used, had been blocked at sunset with spiked logs set firmly on wooden supports, and were guarded by only two sentries apiece. However those sentries were wide awake, and there were others nearby, pacing the rampart and tending the watchfires. Hardly a cat could have crept into the camp unseen.

And the Romans took additional precaution, owing to the fog. A patrol of fifty men under a centurion, was marching at a distance of a hundred paces from the rampart around and around the camp at arbitrary intervals. Twice, while Tros and his party lay and wondered what Eough might be doing, the patrol passed so close that they could hear the soldiers' breathing.

One thing was certain, Eough could not make any excuse about the stars; they were invisible. He would need all his ingenuity to invent a reason for approaching the woodstack, to say nothing of remaining near it unobserved. As the hours wore on Tros began to despair of the plan's success.

The Northmen had grown cold again. Their teeth were chattering. Caswallon was growing restless. Tros, depressed to the depths of his being over Helma's death, began to feel that, even though Eough should not fail them, the prospect of success had vanished for the simple reason that his party had no spirit left. They were in no mood to take advantage of surprize.

However, as the patrol drew near for the third time, he heard laughter. Then he heard one legionary mimicking a high-pitched voice. He could only catch fragments of conversation as the patrol went by.

"What did they do with him, Flavius?"

"Fed him and let him make himself a nest inside the woodstack. The funny little rascal said he was afraid of roofs and walls. Our Cæsar took quite a fancy to him, joked about ——"

Tros could not hear the rest. It was swallowed in the fog and by the heavy tramp of armed men. Silence, too sudden and intense for comfort, succeeded the jolt of retreating footsteps. The patrol had halted, a hundred, possibly two hundred feet away. Then came the sound of two men marching back, and suddenly the centurion's form loomed out of the fog, his shield in front of him, wrapped in cloth to protect its decorations from the damp air.

"Who is here? What are you doing here?" he demanded, and a legionary stepped up from behind him, sword drawn, ready for emergency.

TROS said afterward that the gods did all the work that night, avenging Helma's death. Yet he himself distinctly had a part in it. He sprang at the centurion and beat him to the ground unconscious before he could utter a cry. Caswallon ran the legionary through below the breast bone, and Sigurdsen's great ax hit home into his brain. His cry, fog-smothered, might have reached the ears of

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the patrol, but that same second an explosion louder than a thunderclap split night asunder. Green, blue, yellow flame spurted above the rampart, and the sudden ensuing darkness hummed with flying lumps of wood. Then another explosion. Then another. Shouts, yells, a panic of armed men, which is worse than milling cattle. Two more explosions, flame, flame everywhere, sulphurous yellow and blue and green flame, burning with the stench of Styx.

The disordered patrol came charging through the fog to find their officer, but Tros, Caswallon, and the Northmen at their backs were gone straight at the camp, taking the ditch in two jumps, scrambling up the earthwork, cutting down a panic-stricken sentry—none remembered afterward who did that—then standing on the rampart for a moment, breathless, wondering what next.

Below was nightmare—fog, smoke, flame, tents and thatch afire; dark fantoms hurrying through it all, most of them with cloths around their heads, against the stench. Cæsar's tent, by a fluke of luck was standing, not on fire; the glare from the blazing, scattered woodpile threw it into high relief, and the stinking smoke coiled past it like a breath from the infernal regions. Then another explosion.

"I see him!" Caswallon yelled, and leaped off the rampart.

But he saw the wrong man. It was a general in a white cloak that he and Sigurdsen pulled down, gagged, wrapped in the folds of his own finery, and bore away into the outer night.

Tros saw Cæsar standing beside a trumpeter, who blew as if his lungs would burst, trying to rally the men out of their panic. Cæsar was leaning on the trumpeter, leaning strangely. He fell when a Northman crashed his ax-blade into the trumpeter's skull. Tros picked him up without a struggle, covered him in his own cloak, felt the body writhing in his arms and recognized the strained, convulsive movements of an epileptic.

"The gods!" he exclaimed. "The gods!"

Away then, and over the rampart, part of the way in the midst of a crowd of fugitives who gagged and coughed at the appalling stench and fled from the flame and the whirling wood. None paused to look at Tros. None challenged him. A last explosion split the darkness with a belch of stenching flame as Tros jumped into the camp ditch, Cæsar in his arms; and there in the ditch he stumbled on Caswallon and Sigurdsen, grunting as they fought in the dark to subdue their captive without killing him.

"I have Cæsar!" Tros gasped, digging his toe into Caswallon's ribs. "Kill that fellow. Come on, hurry!"

Somebody, probably Sigurdsen, struck home into the struggling Roman's neck. He had not surrendered; he could lay no claim to quarter. Tros gave Cæsar to two Northmen, who took him over-shoulder like a long grain sack. The others formed a a flying wedge, Tros in the lead.

"To the shore! To the ship!" Tros hissed, and they were off.

Three times they lost the way. A dozen dozen times they had to halt and hide, holding their breath at risk of strangling, while shouting legionaries hurried past them through the dark fog, crying out the names of friends or of company commanders. Once they were seen and challenged they charged behind Tros and slew—they never knew how many, Caswallon's long sword and the Northmen's axes licking through the fog like tongues of sudden fire.

Behind them all Gaul seemed aroar. The burning booths and woodstack threw a lurid light over the camp, and in the distance from the other camp beyond the river came a stream of torches as the famous Tenth made haste to run, row, swim, roaring to Cæsar's aid.

Cæsar lay still on the Northmen's shoulders when the epileptic fit had spent itself. He was no longer rigid, but unconscious when they laid him in a boat at last and Sigurdsen uncovered his white face.

"Is he dead?" Caswallon asked, in an awed voice sharp with disappointment.

"Not he!" said another voice. "His time hasn't come. You can't kill him. You daren't."

Eough jumped in over the boat's bow as they pushed off.

"Horse Dung Tros, I have come for my women and children," he remarked. "You must send some men to bring those other boats and row them all ashore."

Thereafter only Eough spoke curtly, giving the direction, seeming to know the way by instinct through a fog so dense that a man could hardly see his hand stretched out in front of him.

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Eough was the first up the ship's side, counting the dark herd of heads that murmured to him from the ship's waist.

"Hurry!" he said, "Hurry!" stamping his feet nervously. "Fill the boat with Northmen, Fish Oil Tros! Send them to bring all four boats back and take my people in one journey. We must all be gone by morning. If the Romans catch me, they'll torture all of us! Hurry! Hurry! Yes, I'll go and show the fools the way."

CHAPTER XIV

AVE, CÆSAR, IMPERATOR!

WITHIN the longship's midship house where the mast rose through the peaked roof, there was a thwartship table. On that they laid Cæsar and watched him by the light of a flickering whale-oil lamp.

Helma's dead body lay astern under the little steering deck, in all the state Tros could provide, covered with his purple cloak and watched by her brother Sigurdsen. The remainder of the crew were forward, their low-pitched, awe-struck voices blanketed by the fog and by the sucking of the calm sea overside.

Caswallon fretted, biting at his lip; fretted for no other reason than that he could not honorably fight a man recovering from epilepsy. He believed that epilepsy was a visitation from the gods. Tros knew that Cæsar had conceited theories of the same kind, suffering the inconvenience of ever more frequently recurring fits with a complacency that grew more smug as he advanced in years, in notoriety, in influence and in the estimation of his men.

As the pupils of his eyes at last expanded and the rigor of the seizure lessened with returning consciousness, not moving yet, but breathing easily and seeming to grow aware of his surroundings, Cæsar smiled. Caswallon was about to speak, but Tros made a gesture and they continued to watch so silently that they could hardly hear each other's breath.

Cæsar's characteristic first motion was toward his bald head with the forefinger of his right hand. Then he felt at his pallium, as by instinct, making sure his thighs were covered decently.* He felt at his head again and frowned. There was no wreath there. Consciousness of baldness irked him.

None spoke yet. Tros was the first whom he stared at, and he recognized Tros almost instantly, but no fear traced itself on the pallid face. Rather, his eyes grew distant and more dignified. Then he looked at Caswallon curiously.

"Who are you?" he asked, speaking Latin.

Caswallon understood the question, not the words.

"I am Fflur's husband. I have come for her," he said in Gaulish, and Cæsar understood that language well enough. A whimsical smile flitted over his lips.

"So you are Fflur's husband. What a title!"

Again he spoke Latin. Caswallon lost the gist of the remark, but Tros, who understood it, set his face hard. He plucked Caswallon's sleeve and drew him to where the sailcloth curtains closed the rear end of the cabin.

"Men with the falling sickness," he said in low tones, "recover swiftly when the fit has spent itself. They tell me Cæsar's brain is even more than usually active after an attack. Are you willing to abandon Fflur to the Roman's mercy, say for a week or two.

Caswallon shook his head. He seemed surprized that Tros should ask the question. Tros nodded, now sure of his ground at any rate.

"I would have given the same answer, were she my wife. But I warn you, we have a difficult part to play against a master strategist."

Cæsar sat up on the table, smoothing his pallium and leaning back against the mast.

"Give me a napkin," he commanded. And then, when Tros had passed him a piece of linen and he had wiped the dry froth from his lips, "Where am I?"

It was Tros who answered.

"You are at sea, in my ship. You are the Lord Caswallon's prisoner."

"Very well," Cæsar answered in Gaulish, "I will deal with him." He eyed Caswallon with a very piquant curiosity. "What are your terms?"

Caswallon paused, stared steely-eyed at him, then spoke deliberately:

"Had you been a man, you should have fought me hand-to-hand. That would have been the end of you."

Cæsar smiled.

*Authorities seem to agree that Caesar, even when being slain by the conspirators under Balbus' lead, took thought to cover himself decently.

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"And I suspect the end of Fflur then also," he intimated with a dry nod. "Let me see. Unless my memory plays tricks, your wife is in one of my camps at Seine mouth. Marcus Balbus, I think, is in attendance on her. A very safe man, Balbus. I would like a drink."

Tros gave him red wine in a silver cup. He drank a little of it and returned the cup with a gesture as if Tros were his servant.

"It is very cold here," he said then. "Have you nothing to cover me?"

Tros pulled a heavy blanket out from underneath the table. Cæsar wrapped it over his knees and shoulders. Caswallon, bridling at the Roman's air of confidence, spoke again and his voice was harsh. He had none of Cæsar's sarcasm and did not know how to assume it.

"I have heard you described as a woman. I do not fight women."

"No," Cæsar interrupted, "you are a woman's husband. I heard you say so. Now if you will name the amount of the ransom, we will make arrangements to procure the money with all speed, so that I may get away from this abominably cold ship. Then you can run away back to your island, where I will presently come and teach you what it means to submit me to this indignity. Name the ransom. I will pay it."

"How will you pay for the life of the Lord Tros' wife, whom one of your soldiers slew?" Caswallon asked him.

"We will see," said Cæsar. "I will deal with Tros when his turn comes. Name the amount of my ransom."

Caswallon blew a great snort.

"Ransom! You would wring the money from the Gauls. I am no enemy of the Gauls or of the Druids that I should turn you loose on them to extort money to pay me. First, you shall sign an undertaking never again to invade Britain."

"Are you the king of Britain?" Cæsar asked.

"I am king of the Trinobantes."

"Precisely," said Cæsar. "The chief of one small tribe. You have no authority to speak for Britain then, have you? With your, ah, kind permission, I suggest we should confine ourselves to actualities."

He smiled, rearranging the folds of the blanket, apparently as unconcerned as if he were discussing last week's murderous games in the arena.

Caswallon glared, and glanced at Tros. But before Tros could put in a word Cæsar was speaking again, his voice well modulated, calm, amused.

"I suggest you should keep me prisoner and see what comes of it. That may be the best way to teach you and your Britons a lesson. You have made more trouble for me by sending over your emissaries to stir up the Gauls against me than I intend to tolerate. Your wife may stay in Gaul and you may carry me to Britain. I am curious to see your country."

TROS let a bitter smile escape him. Cæsar, too, smiled almost imperceptibly and his eyes betrayed that he knew he held the winning hand. Caswallon tugged at his moustache. Both he and Tros felt rather like small boys in the presence of their superior and both resented it, but before either could speak Cæsar's calm voice filled the silence.

"I suppose you used that dwarf to carry pitch and sulphur into my camp. Clever, very clever! Well, if the dwarf was not killed, my men will catch him, and it may amuse me to make use of him to set your town on fire when I come there with my army."

"We are wasting time," Tros said in an undertone, but Cæsar heard him and looked pleasantly amused.

Time was all-important. If the fog should lift ——

Caswallon drew himself erect, bumping his head against the roof-beam, which in no way increased his self-control. He spoke his mind deliberately, harshly:

"You are a reptile! If you were less or more, you would never have sent Marius and Galba to enjoy my hospitality and work this treachery behind my back. I loathe you. I could vomit on you. But you hold the mother of my sons. You are not worth one hair on her head, but because I honor her you must go free in exchange for her, although it shames me that I must pay for her with such a vicious beast as you. Your vile heart looks out through your eyes! So, no more words. You shall go free. But no Roman shall bring Fflur to me. You shall write me a letter and sign it, passing me into the camp where Fflur is, releasing to me Fflur and those other prisoners whom your lying envoys took, passing

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us out with military honors, unmolested, free to go where we will and unaccompanied. And while I go to bring Fflur, you shall remain here at the sword-point of the Lord Tros."

Cæsar, watching both men, smiled. He seemed to be hardly interested in Caswallon's speech, hardly to have heard it. It was Tros's face that amused him. Tros, realizing he had forgotten something, ground his teeth. Aboard that ship there was neither stylus nor tablet nor a parchment they could write on! Caswallon, realizing the predicament and swearing under his breath, rummaged among the contents of a shelf beneath the table.

"So you will have to take me with you to your island or else set me ashore unless you elect to kill me," said Cæsar, summing up the situation cheerfully.

His smile was condescending, but it vanished instantly.

"You lie!" Tros answered. And he solved that riddle swiftly, drawing his long sword. Its point touched Cæsar's throat. "Your tablet!" he commanded. "Tablet and stylus! They hang by a cord under your cloak."

He was guessing, but he had guessed right. Cæsar produced them. The waxen tablet lay in a fine silver case that contained stylus as well and ink to smear over the indentations on the wax.

"Tchutt-tchutt! Remember dignity!" said Cæsar. "Bad manners, Tros, are never creditable."

"Write!" Tros commanded. "Write that you are the Lord Caswallon's prisoner. Thereafter, add what he told you to write."

"Oh, of course, if you wish," Cæsar answered, but he had begun to look amused again. "You understand, I have only your [illegible] for it that you will release me after- [illegible]. Don't you think my officers might [illegible] demur? I suggest you might do [illegible] to listen to a proposal from me"

He rose [illegible] the table, yawning to hide the fact that he was shivering from cold. He was a little weak still, his knees inclined to tremble, and he sat down again with great dignity, rearranging the folds of the blanket.

"I think we would do better to deal with individuals by name, so I will write this letter to Marcus Balbus, who is in, ah, in attendance on the, ah, on the lady and who is in my confidence. Balbus will appreciate my feelings. He will avoid publicity. We are close to the shore? Very well. Balbus will conduct the, ah, ladies and gentlemen to the shore, as close to this ship as possible.

"One of you may accompany him if you wish; the other may remain with me, and I am sure I shall enjoy the society of whichever of you can tolerate mine for that hour or two. The exchange will take place on shore, and you may take my word for it that there will be no indiscretion on our side, provided there is none on yours. Thereafter, I will give you two hours to be out of sight of land."

"Write!" Caswallon ordered, pointing at the tablet.

But Tros said nothing.

"Two hours," Cæsar added by way of afterthought, as if he were conceding something for the sake of generosity, "from the time the fog lifts, which it usually does soon after daybreak."

He coughed. The cold fog filled the cabin. Then he wrote in his beautiful, firm hand with the tablet on his lap, Tros holding the lamp for him. When he had done he passed the tablet to Caswallon who gave it to Tros to read. Tros nodded.

"Bring ink and parchment when you come," he whispered.

Two minutes later a Northman crew went overside to row Caswallon ashore, and Tros faced Cæsar alone. At the end of a minute or two of silence he sat down on the table and Cæsar made room for him, leaning his back against the ship's side with his legs stretched straight in front of him.

"Pass me that folded sheepskin," he suggested, and made use of it as a cushion between his shoulders and the wall. "Damp, uncomfortable places, ships' cabins," he went on. "I am no mollycoddle, but I marvel at the hardihood of men who choose the sea for their vocation. Now Tros—" Cæsar's voice changed subtly; he was beginning to use consciously the full force of his personal magnetism—"I promised the last time we met—it was not far from here, I remember, to crucify you whenever I catch you. Put me not to that necessity. Surely there is no real need for me to have to catch you."

"I could crucify you now," Tros answered, "but I will not demean myself. You are too magnificent a rascal to be killed except in fair fight."

"Tros, that is generously spoken. I

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admire nobility even in my enemies. Did I understand correctly that your wife has been killed by a Roman arrow?"

Tros nodded, chin on hand, elbow on knee, the hilt of his sword where he could reach it instantly.

"The news distresses me," Cæsar went on. "She would have been quite safe, however, had she not tried to escape. Accept my sympathy. And now, Tros, be sensible and listen. You and I are both men who can be magnanimous. We are not barbarians. We are above the little ordinary jealousies and trivial ill feelings. I am willing to confess that I admire you and your cleverness, also your courage. All true Romans admire courage. Let us come to an agreement. I need a truly bold sea captain. I also need the secret of whatever that compound was that blew my camp to pieces. Come now, I will make you admiral of the greatest Roman fleet that ever put to sea."

TROS moved, leaned back against the mast and smiled.

"Yes," he said, "you shall make me a Roman admiral! Mark this, Cæsar, the Lord Caswallon has agreed with you, but I not yet. I pledge no loyalty to Rome, and none to you, but you shall write me that appointment of commander of your fleet and I will make shrewd use of it. Write it or die!" He stood up, arms akimbo, laughing. "I say you shall write it, or I will visit my wife's death on you!"

"Let me remind you that your friend Caswallon, as well as his wife Fflur——"

Tros interrupted:

"If I have to kill you, and I will if I must, I will presently land my crew and cut Caswallon and Fflur free when your man Balbus brings them to the beach! Die if you wish! If not, you shall also write to Lomar the ship-master of Vectis a receipt for his cargo of tin, which I need. Ten tons of tin, to be paid for at the same rate as the last consignment, on presentation of that receipt to your agent in Caritia. I will remove the tin from Lomar's ship on my way home."

"A pirate, eh? A pirate at heart!" said Cæsar. "You, who might have been a Roman admiral!"

"A Roman admiral I am, or you die!" Tros retorted. "The tin I take, we will call an admiral's year's pay! You shall write that, too, in the appointment. I know you, Cæsar, and I know the road I take. I saw the mark you set just now below your signature, and I am not so dullwitted but I guessed its meaning. Men in your confidence, Cæsar, have to think swiftly and be swiftly treacherous, eh? Your Balbus will send a whispered message, won't he? An ambush on the shore, or failing that, of your magnanimity, you allowed us two hours after the fog lifts, didn't you? Then ships to surround us while we dawdle here at anchor relying on your promise. Hah!"

Cæsar appeared interested and amused.

"You are a fool, Tros," he said after a moment's pause, "but you are not quite such a fool as Caswallon. You have refused my friendship, but he consented to trade Cæsar for a woman! You shall have your parchments, and my enmity. I yield him only my contempt."

"For which he will care no more than I!" Tros answered.

And for an hour after that they sat in silence, Cæsar closing his eyes and, if not sleeping, pretending to. At the end of an hour he coughed again and informed Tros that, in spite of the fog, he would prefer to wait on deck.

"These seizures of mine leave my throat congested. I breathe better in the open."

Tros laughed and touched his sword-hilt. "You shall sit outside," he answered. "But I see you have recovered altogether from the seizure. I remember how strongly you swim!"

He summoned four Northmen and made Cæsar sit between them on an oar-bench, he with his sword drawn standing by. And so they were waiting in a fog that gave no hint of the approaching dawn, when Caswallon's voice hailed them, asking the direction. Tros boomed back to him through hollowed hands and presently Caswallon stepped aboard with Fflur behind him, followed by all the captured slave-women and all except two of the escort who had been captured along with them. Caswallon thrust two sheets of parchment into Tros' hand.

Fflur, one white hand on Tros' shoulder—she had no words for him; they choked her when she tried—stared at Cæsar as if he were some monster she had never expected to behold outside her dreams. Cæsar stared at her and at Caswallon. He was puzzled. Caswallon, looming like a giant in the white fog, laughed at him.

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"I heard your fellow Balbus giving whispered orders to a slave. So when we reached the shore I smote friend Balbus. He isn't dead, but I wager he needs the doctor! He cried out. Did you hear him? Ten fools of your Tenth Legion who escorted us, ran to his rescue, so I put as many as I could into the boat and we came away. The Northmen row well. We were too quick for your frozen Tenth. You must thaw them, Cæsar, before they will be any good against us Britons!"

Cæsar's face betrayed no hint of the anxiety that must have gripped him. He smiled.

"Unhappy Balbus!" he exclaimed. "Forever overzealous! I suppose he was taking precautions to ensure secrecy for my sake. So his whispering alarmed you. Well, well, let us hope he is not too badly hurt." He made a gesture toward the parchments in Tros' hand. "Shall we conclude our business? I am anxious to return to shore before news of my absence ——"

Caswallon's loud laugh interrupted him.

"*Ave, Cæsar!*" he remarked, using all the Latin he knew. "I think you must be the greatest rogue the world has ever seen! You commit foul treachery on me, and then dare to count on my promise to let you go, even though I now have Fflur! Ludd's blood and backbone! Well, my promise holds. I made it. You shall go free."

"I admire your sense of honor. It becomes you," Cæsar answered, bowing.

"Write!" commanded Tros, and gestured toward the cabin where the table was.

So Cæsar wrote what Tros dictated, while Fflur, her arms around Caswallon, begged him not to return to shore for the two remaining Britons.

"Let the Northmen take Cæsar and bring them in exchange for him. There will be treachery yet!"

"Not I! This Cæsar is my guest!" Caswallon laughed. "But if he tries to trick me, I will kill him! If the Northmen should go ashore again without me, Cæsar would simply add them to the two of my men Balbus has, and we should have the whole work to do over again."

Cæsar came out of the cabin and bowed to them all with condescending dignity, his lips curled with a trace of sarcasm. He hardly glanced at Fflur, but he met Tros' eyes and nodded.

"So we are enemies," he said. "It is a pity."

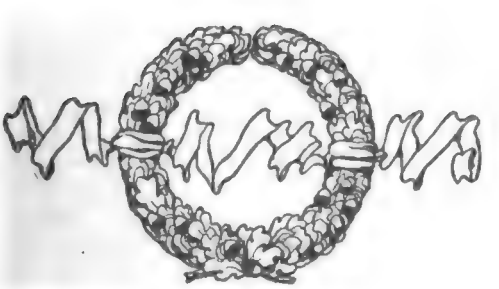
Then he looked straight at Caswallon, as if he were judging a slave in the market.

"You seem to me a good barbarian but an unwise chief," he remarked. "I will come one of these days and see how barbarous and unwise you really are. And now, are we ready? It is very comfortless and cold here."

Caswallon and four Northmen made another journey to the shore, this time with Cæsar in the boat's stern, while Tros and Fflur leaned overside, listening anxiously for noises in the fog. After an interminable interval they heard Caswallon's shout and Fflur gripped Tros's arm. But the chief was on his way, returning with the two remaining Britons.

"All's well!" he called.

"All's well?" Tros tucked the parchments into his tunic. "Is it? I know Cæsar! Sigurdsen! Up anchor! Out oars! All haste to sea before Cæsar's ships put out of Seine mouth and surround us!"



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OUT OF THE HOLE

by Walter J. Coburn

Author of "Deuce High," "The Grub-Line," etc.

THE white-haired man behind the sandstone rimrock lowered his field-glasses long enough to light the short butt of cigaret wedged between his straight lips. The lips were smiling oddly and there was an annoyed look in the slate-colored eyes under the bushy gray brows. Then he once more lifted the glasses to his eyes and focused the powerful lenses on the little drama enacted far below where the dry wash widened to lose itself in the desert.

"That'll be Mart Cowell on the blue roan," he muttered. "Kin tell by the way he sits his saddle when his hoss dodges cactus. Akward lookin' as —— on a hoss, ole Mart, but never seen him git throwed. Best sheriff in Arizona, bar none. Lookit that posse laggin' behind! Yaller dogs, a-lettin' Mart take all the chances! Mart's a gainin' on his man. No, durn me if he is. The gent's done let that bay hoss out a notch. He'll make it to the Hole if the bay don't fall when he hits the rocks at the mouth uh the wash."

The man on the bay horse twisted in the saddle and, firing over his shoulder, emptied his carbine at the sheriff two hundred yards behind. The man on the bay was little past his teens—twenty, perhaps. Tanned, muscular, clean-featured his clear blue eyes shone with the excitement of the chase. With a reckless laugh he gave the bay his head and sped along the twisting trail at breakneck speed. It would take a top horse to negotiate the trail at that speed. Giant granite boulders where a rider's *tapaderos* scraped on either side. Chances a-plenty for a broken knee or a twisted foot as one's horse dodged between the rocks. Yet horse and rider were making it without a scratch.

The man behind the rimrock nodded his approval, then scowled at the swift-moving form of the old sheriff on the blue roan.

"Don't be a plumb —— fool, Mart," he growled, laying aside the glasses and picking up a Winchester. "Don't go comin' no fu'ther. Yuh fool! Yuh plumb loco fool!"

The Winchester was raised as Mart Cowell spurred his horse toward the mouth of the wash. The posse was far behind the doughty sheriff now. A slate-gray eye lined the sights of the Winchester. A puff of white smoke. The crashing echo of the report rebounding in the walls of the cañon. A puff of flying particles of granite as the bullet struck a boulder ten feet ahead of the sheriff, ricocheted and went whining on its way.

Cowell reined his horse to a halt and shook his fist at the wall of the cañon.

"Madder'n all git out!" chuckled the man behind the rimrock as he ejected the smoking shell and shoved a fresh cartridge into the magazine.

"Mart'll go home now. He's come as fur as he dast. Gamest sheriff that ever lined sights, Mart Cowell. Now, le's see what kind of a outlaw he run into the Hole tuh keep me company."

Leaving the rimrock, the watcher got to

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his feet. His clothes were shabby and patched, yet clean. Overalls, shirt and jumper showed traces of many washings. His tanned, sun-lined face was clean-shaven and the thick, snow-white hair under the battered hat showed signs of rude, self-administered barbering. Tall, gaunt as a timber wolf, he moved with the springy step of an athlete. A sagging, well-filled cartridge belt was buckled across the lean hips. In the low-tied holster showed the age-yellowed ivory butt of a long-barreled Colt. He carried the rifle in the crook of his arm. As he moved toward a buckskin colored horse that grazed in a little clearing, his lean face twisted in a grimace. Then without warning a fit of coughing laid hold of him and he sank to a log. For several seconds the racking cough tore his spare frame. Finally it was over. The blue bandana handkerchief that he had held to his mouth came away stained with blood. He sat there for several minutes, his bloodshot eyes fixed in a brooding stare. Then he rose and went to his horse. His step was less springy now and there was a pitiful stoop to his lean, muscled shoulders.

He mounted, and the buckskin horse picked its way along the downward trail.

"Mebbeso I'm jest a-foolin' myself," he smiled thinly, "but she didn't seem tuh last so long to-day. 'N the blood wa'n't so bad. If only the rains had come an' gone an' the sun'd come out hot, I'd mebbeso make a live of it. Rainy season's nigh on us. Speck uh cloud a hangin' like a cotton ball yonder on the skyline. What ails yuh, Buck? Smell a stranger?"

A long right leg swung across the saddle horn and over the buckskin's neck. The rider slipped to the ground and into a brush patch. The horse, ears twitching with curiosity, kept along the trail at a running walk. Keeping in the shelter of the brush, the white-haired man followed, twenty feet behind, gun ready.

"Stick 'em up!" called a voice down the trail. "Stick—

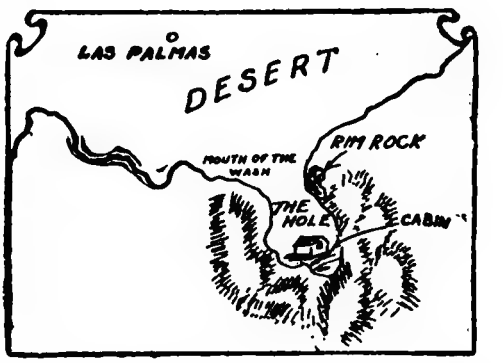
Well I'll be ——!"

The buckskin had halted and the blue-eyed young man who had recently escaped the sheriff and posse stared foolishly at the empty saddle.

"Jest drop yore gun on the ground, sonny," came a soft voice from the brush. "Then step into the trail with yore hands as high toward the sky as they'll go. I gotta have a squint at yore brand an' earmarks."

The youth hesitated a moment. Came the dull *click-click* as a Winchester went to full cock in the brush at his back. Tossing his gun aside, the boy stepped into the trail, grinning sheepishly.

Followed minutes of silence broken by mysterious movements in the brush. The youth in the trail felt a tired ache in his elevated arms. The grin left his lips. Then the tall, white-haired man stepped from the brush. He had laid aside the Winchester and his hands swung easily at his sides. In moving, the right hand brushed against the yellow ivory butt of the long-barreled Colt.



"Yuh made a plumb purty race, son," he said quietly as the boy faced him. "You kin lower yore hands now. A right purty race; me'n ole Meat-in-the-Pot done convinced Mart that it was bad medicine tuh foller yuh into the Hole. Likely lookin' hoss yuh fork. Takes a movin' animal tuh outfoot Mart's roan. Buck's done it twict but he had tuh lay his belly on the ground tuh cut the mustard. Buck's the dun-colored hoss that yuh seen go down the trail. Yuh'd orter learn yore bay that trick, it's a good 'un."

As the older man talked, he surveyed the boy from the tip of his dented Stetson to the tips of his glove-fitting, shop made boots. His slate-colored eyes missed no detail.

"Button offen yore shirt," he said earnestly. "Got a button at the cabin that'll do. We might as well be goin' on down. Got a pot o' beans on a-b'ilin'. Water's a mite alkali but a pinch u'h sody he'ps soften 'er. I hope yuh brung terbaccer."

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"Only about half a sack," admitted the boy. "I left Las Palmas kinda sudden."

"Roll 'em thin' an' smoke 'em down clost an' we'll make out. I hear they got a movin' pitcher show at Las Palmas?"

The boy nodded. "My six-shooter is ——"

"Is here in my waistband, son. Yuh' don't need a gun here in the Hole. An when yuh go tuh fetch yore hoss, don't bother lookin' fer yore carbine. It's hid. Bimeby, when me'n you gits better acquainted, I'll give yuh back yore weepons. Now let's git down tuh them beans."

"You ain't asked my name."

The older man smiled and shook his head. "No."

"Ner what the posse was chasin' me fer?"

"No."

The boy smiled as if embarrassed and reached for his papers and tobacco. The slate-colored eyes had a way of looking at and through him that was disconcerting.

"Keerful o' the terbaccer, son," came the soft-toned drawl of the older man.

The boy pocketed his tobacco.

"Don't need a smoke, noways. Guess I was aimin' tuh roll a smoke tuh keep my hands busy. Kinda nervous."

He got his horse and returned to the trail, leading the animal. On foot he followed the older man who walked along the trail.

Suddenly the youth halted, frowning in a puzzled manner as he searched one pocket after another.

"Lose suthin'?"

"A bill fold," replied the boy. "—— the luck."

"JOGGED outa yore pocket, like as not, when Mart was a crowdin' yuh up the dry wash. You kin look for it in the mornin'. Onless yuh gits tired of an ole codger's company, yuh'll have time a plenty on yore hands tuh look fer it. Dunno as a bill fold'll be much use noways, here in the Hole.

With a soft chuckle, he led the way down the twisting trail.

The boy followed in silence, a worried frown puckering the short lines between his sun-bleached brows.

Presently they came to a clearing in the center of which stood a tiny cabin. The buckskin horse, grazing near by, lifted his head and nickered softly. In the doorway of the cabin appeared a huge, wolf-gray dog, growling in an undertone, ruff bristling.

"Come out an' say howdy to our visitor, Lobo," called the man.

The dog stepped out, sniffing, and with a dignified step approached the youth.

"Don't try fer tuh pat 'im, son. Let 'im git yore scent fust. That's the idee. Don't look fer him tuh wag his tail, fer he ain't that kind. Raised him from the size of a jack rabbit an' never seen him wag that tail uh his onct. His mammy was wolf an' his pap a collie turned wild. That's right, son, stoop down let 'im lick yore face. That's his way uh sayin' howdy. He won't bother yuh none now, go ahead an' hobble yore hoss. I'll take a squint at them beans."

When the boy had unsaddled and hobbled the bay, he entered the cabin. In his hand was a half-filled burlap sack which he tossed on one of the two bunks.

"That's right, son. Make yorese'f tuh home. That'll be yore bunk. Bud ain't needin' it no more."

"Bud?"

"Bud Carver, my kid brother. That was his grave yuh passed where the trail skirts the big hackberry tree. I'm Long John Carver."

"I—figured you was. I didn't know Bud Carver had died. The wagon boss at the J Cross used tuh set around of a evenin' tellin' about the Carver boys, and the days when you worked for the J Cross. You and Mart Cowell. It was him that told me about the Hole."

"So," smiled Long John, "When yuh got in bad with the law, yuh high-tailed it fer the Hole, ey?"

"That's it. I stuck up the Las Palmas bank and ——"

"I didn't ask what yuh'd done," Long John reminded him.

"But a man's *gotta* tell somebody," insisted the boy. Then, as the older man regarded him gravely, "*Don't he?*"

"Mebbe. Depends." He was head and shoulders taller than the boy. He stood looking down into the upturned face.

"Some ways, yuh remind me uh Bud. Young an' keerless an' full uh —— like. Bud usta talk like that. Headstrong as a bronc an' allers fightin' the bit. Even at the last he was thataway. His eyes was blue like yourn, too. Now if you'll fetch a pail uh water from the crick an' split up

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some mesquite, I'll build up a batch uh biscuits."

"You kin call me Dave," said the boy as he started outside.

"Dave it is."

As Dave's spurs tinkled merrily along the trail to the creek, Long John took a flat bill fold from his overalls pocket and examined the contents with minute care. Only when the spurs heralded the return of his new partner did he put the bill fold back in his pocket. As he walked to the cupboard his gait was that of an old man and the stoop to his shoulders was more noticeable than before. Midway to the cupboard, the racking cough sent him reeling across the room.

Dave, entering a few minutes later with a pail of water, found him sitting on the edge of his bunk, pale and exhausted, the blood-stained handkerchief pressed to his colorless lips. Carver tried to grin but the effect was ghastly. As Dave held the dipper of water to his lips he thanked the boy with his eyes.

Some minutes later, when the color had come back into Carver's lean cheeks, preparation for the evening meal went on.

"For men that's lived all their lives under the stars," said the older man when they had begun eating, "prison is jest nacherally ——. It'd be like tryin' tuh keep Lobo shet up in the cabin. Onct, when he was a half-growed pup, I locked him in the cabin while I snuk into town fer grub. I figgered tuh be gone one day. It took me three. When I got back the pup was so ga'nt yuh could see every rib. He hadn't took one bite uh the grub I'd left on the floor fer him. I ain't never tried tuh keep him inside since. I knowed how he felt about it. I'd felt that same way every day for ten years at Leavenworth. Dunno as yuh savvy, quite, Dave."

"I had a caged eagle onct," replied Dave. "Turned him loose the fifth day. Yeah, I think I savvy, Carver. No wonder yuh escaped, first chance yuh got."

"Bud stuck up the train when they was takin' me to the hospital tuh treat my lungs. I'd got word to the outside that the the T. B had got hold uh me, and the doc was givin' me two months tuh die. Bud was ranchin' in the Argentine an' doin' right good at it. He'd quit the road agent game when they sent me up after the Sante Fe stick-up. A member uh the old gang took Bud word an' he come back. There was some shootin' when he jumped my guard in the smokin' car. We got away but Bud got hit in the groin. He hung an' rattled till we hit the Hole, then keeled over."

"Dead?" asked Dave, after an interval of silence.

"No. Bud was headstrong, even when it come tuh dyin'. It's plumb hard tuh kill a young feller that's made uh rawhide an' barb wire. These lungs uh mine was in a —— of a shape then. Hemorhages every time I moved out of a walk. I shore had trouble a-gettin' Bud tied on the bunk. He'd gone outa his head an' thought I was a law officer; kept tryin' tuh kill me, continual. He laid me out twict while I was gittin' him hog-tied. Took me half the night gittin' the .44 slug outa his groin. A skinnin' knife an' a bent wire ain't what a man might call easy tools tuh work with. Raw whisky tuh wash the hole out. Then I went fer the saw-bones at Las Palmas. Posses a ridin' every pinnacle. Then the —— didn't want tuh come. Skeered, I reckon. Had tuh tie his feet under his hoss's belly. Whisky kept me goin'. Whisky an' the pitcher uh my kid brother tied tuh the bunk. Onct a couple uh deputies spotted us in the moonlight an' that —— doc like tuh died every time a bullet cut the air clost."

Long John smiled twistedly at the memory.

"The doc fixed Bud up all right?" asked Dave.

"He was dead when we got here." Carver's voice had grown a bit husky. "He'd got his hands loose. Found a paper an' a soft nose ca'tridge an' tried tuh write. Tuh tell me so-long, savvy? He musta got his right senses afore he died—*alone*."

Rising, the white-haired old outlaw went to the cupboard and from it took a bit of torn wrapping paper. He handed it to Dave.

"So-long, John," read the rambling scrawl. "I'm —"

A crooked, jerky line finished the sentence.

"That was two years ago," Carver went on. "I ain't bin outa the Hole since, except tuh sneak tuh town fer grub an terbaccer. I wisht you'd brought more smokin' Dave."

The younger man made no reply. He seemed lost in thought.

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"Better eat yore supper, son," Carver reminded him.

"Seem tuh kinda lost my appetite, Carver."

He pushed back his chair and went to his bunk. The half-filled burlap sack still lay where he had thrown it. Long John was scraping the tin plates clean. Once he looked at the younger man's back. Perhaps he was reminded of his dead brother for he smiled softly.

For several minutes Dave stood looking at the bulging sack. Then he took it and walking to the stove, stuffed it into the flames and replaced the stove lid. Carver, watching him, made no comment. His slate-colored eyes were as expressionless as ever.

"If I'd be company for yuh, John." Dave seemed to speak with difficulty. "I'll stay a week er so."

"Plumb tickled tuh have yuh, son."

Carver ignored the odor of burning burlap.

II

LONG JOHN returned Dave's six-shooter and carbine the following day. Neither man commented on this. The older man had accepted the boy as a friend and words seemed superfluous. They talked much of range gossip; Dave doing most of the talking while Long John listened with pathetic eagerness to the meager bits of news from that world from which the law shut him. Of Dave's bank robbery, no word was spoken. It was as if the boy were a visitor.

Meanwhile, above the skyline, the fleecy clouds grew thicker. On the third night following Dave's arrival at the Hole, the storm broke.

Sheets of water smothered the cabin hour after hour without a lull. The wind, howling and shrieking down the cañon, drove the horses to the shelter of the rocks. Long John kept Lobo inside that night.

The dog sniffed at the door, whined softly, and several times during the night paced restlessly to and fro.

"Jest can't stand bein' shet up," smiled Long John, "even on nights like this. There was a Injun boy at Leavensworth that acted fer all the world like that dog. He died in less'n a year. T. B? Mebbe. The doc said it was. Broken heart, I calls it. If I was tuh go back tuh the pen, Dave, I'd not last a month. Mart Cowell knows it. That's why, so long as I don't leave the Hole, he lets me alone. I come back here tuh putter around in the hills till it comes time tuh cross the Big Divide. If they let me alone I'll die quiet an' peaceful. If they crowd me, I'll go out with my boots on an' my gun a-smokin'. Outa the Hole fer keeps."

Twice that night, muffled coughing came from Long John's bunk. Dave, propped on his elbows, stared across the dark cabin until his eyes smarted from the strain. He knew Carver did not want help. The old outlaw nursed a false pride that labeled such attentions as "babyin'."

For a solid week the rain continued at intervals. During that time the sun did not shine once. Carver seemed weaker each morning. The coughing spells became more frequent. Each hemorrhage left its weakening mark. Despite the older man's protests Dave nursed him constantly.

Lobo had been let free the first morning and no amount of coaxing could bring the wolf-dog within rifle shot of the cabin. He came at night to gulp down the food put outside for him.

At midnight of the sixth night Long John had a bad attack. He asked Dave to bring tobacco and papers to the bunk.

"It'll bring on another coughin' spell, John," Dave protested.

"Most mebbe 'twill, son. What's the odds. I'm ridin' fast towards the end uh the trail."

"End, ——!" Dave forced a note of heartiness into his voice. "The sun'll come out in the mornin' and you'll be fit as a fiddle."

Long John shook his head, smiling weakly.

"Listen!" he said.

From down the wash came the mournful, long-drawn howl of Lobo.

"The dog knows. If he comes while I'm sleepin', let him in, Dave. Now wrap me up a cigareet."

Lobo came an hour later. When Dave opened the door he saw that the ruff along the neck of the dog stood on end. Lobo sniffed, then jumped to the bunk to lie at his master's feet. Carver woke from a light sleep and smiled at Dave, seated at the table.

"I knowed he'd come," he said, then closed his eyes again.

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The candle on the table guttered and flared up, throwing weird shadows on the bare log walls. Save for the labored breathing of the sick man the cabin was silent as a tomb.

For forty-eight hours Dave had slept but little. Unshaven, his bloodshot eyes blinking in their sunken sockets, he kept vigil. Sometimes he rubbed flaky tobacco in his eyes to sting them open. Always he watched the parchment-colored features of Carver.

Then the outlaw's eyes opened. Dave rose and crossed over to seat himself on the bunk. Lobo's yellow eyes never left Carver's face.

The old man's groping hand found that of the younger man who gripped it reassuringly.

"What is it, John?"

"ANOTHER cigareet, Davy, afore I starts on the long ride. Thanks. Now jest kinda lift me, son, with the piller a-proppin' me. So's I kin see the stars a-shinin' through the open door. They are a-shinin', ain't they, Dave?"

"Yes. The storm's over, John."

"Yea, plumb over. I hope the trail ain't too slippery fer a man that's bin as onery as me. I done all I could, Davy, the past two years, tuh pay back what money me'n Bud stole. Mart Cowell knows. Up the wash from here. Richest placer in the country. Pans shore big. I get the dust an' nuggets tuh Mart onct a month. He pays the folks I done stole from."

"I didn't know, John. About the placer —or Bud dyin'."

"No. Only me'n Mart knowed. Plumb white, Mart is. So'r you, Davy."

"Like —— I am!" The boy's voice was hoarse with emotion.

Long John smiled gently. "Easy, Dave, yo're scarin' Lobo. Yuh bin plumb square by me, son. I know—more'n yuh give me credit fer. Reach into my overall pocket. The left hip pocket."

Dave did as he was bid. His face went red with embarrassment as he drew forth the bill fold he had lost that first day. The same one Long John had examined so carefully.

"You knowed that——"

"That you was a deputy sheriff hired by the railroad? Yeah. I'm a plumb old hand tuh be easy fooled. I'd uh knowed without findin' yore badge an' the bench warrant in the bill fold. But likewise, when yuh looked me in the eyes, I knowed yuh was a white man—like Mart Cowell. I never asked yuh no questions because I didn't want tuh hear yuh lie. I knowed I had yuh sized up right when yuh burned that sack full uh counterfeit money that yuh was aimin' tuh tell me yuh'd stole from the bank."

"Mart Cowell said you'd ketch on tuh me," said Dave shamefacedly.

Long John nodded.

"It wasn't the reward money that sent yuh into the Hole after me'n Bud."

"—— no!"

"Jest the glory of it. Bud was like that. It was the excitement that turned us from cow punchin'. We never robbed nobody except railroads an' banks. Never killed nobody, even when it meant capture fer me. Mart'll tell yuh. What did ole Mart say when yuh had him chase yuh into the hole?"

"He bet his roan ag'in' my bay that I'd ride outa the hole alone." Dave crossed to the stove and threw the bill fold and its contents into the fire.

"I'm goin' back tuh punchin' cows, John. I got a belly full uh this work."

"This placer," said John, his words coming with difficulty, "you and Mart work it. Plant me under the hackberry alongside Bud. Take keer uh Buck an' Lobo. I'll be startin' now—on the long ride."

Long John's eyes closed wearily. Dave bent over him, gripping the old outlaw's hand. Suddenly the slate-colored eyes opened wide. A glad smile transfiguring the lean features, he looked into Dave's face.

"Bud!" cried the dying man. "Bud I done made it! I found yuh, Bud!"

With a frightened snarl, Lobo sprang from the bed, ruff bristling. A cold, damp draught swept the room, blotting out the light of the candle. A thud as the dog's body struck the wall beyond. A ray of moonlight, falling through the open door, cast a soft light on the bunk.

Slipping his hand from Carver's, Dave wiped the trickle of blood from the smiling lips of the dead man.

With the white moon to light the trail, Long John Carver started on the long ride.

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DIRECT DISOBEDIENCE

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

By Charles Victor Fischer

Author of "Frog," "To the Dogs," etc.

IT BEGAN over a pair of holey black socks, on the forecastle of one of the old battle-ships. The boatswain's mates had just piped down the clothes-line, and there was much scuffling and elbowing among the gobs who cluttered about it and grabbed off their clothes.

"Smokum" Buckner and "Seasick" Boswell, seamen, both laid claim to that pair of holey black socks. Each knew them to be his by the holes in the toes. And they stood there, each with a hand clutching the pair of socks, and each declaring with the venom of his eyes the determination to hold what he had.

They were two well-made youngsters. Both were above medium height, square-shouldered, muscular, lithe and active. But they were as unlike of face as unlike could be. Seasick was white-skinned, had a long thin face with a long flexible nose and a long pointed chin, very light blond hair and sky-blue eyes; while Smokum was dark, almost copper-brown, had curly, dark-brown hair, almost black eyes and heavy, blunted features—a bulldog type, but much better looking than a bulldog.

They continued to snarl and spit their wrath at each other till finally another shipmate, with his arms full of clothes, stepped up between them.

"Here," said he, "I'll give you each a pair of socks, good ones."

"To —— with you and your socks!" snapped Smokum, his face now a blood-red and his dark eyes leaping with the eager anticipation of a fight. "They're my socks and I'm goin' to have 'em!"

But there was much of the same stuff in Seasick Boswell. By nature they were direct opposites—Smokum was fiery, impulsive, headlong; Seasick was cold and deliberative. But in the matter of mulishness they were a pair.

They fought for nearly an hour, till each had battered the face of the other into an unrecognizable mass of gory pulp.

Seasick quit. He didn't disgrace himself in doing that. No one sneers at a man who has done his best. He had given the best he had, which was not as good as Smokum had, that was all. In fact, that fight would have won friends for Seasick Boswell, had he acted the man at the finish, that is, shaken hands and buried the ax. But instead he walked away bearing a grudge, his head full of boiling hate, snarling through his bloody teeth—

"I'll get you some other time; some other way!"

They were both youngsters in the service then, on their first enlistments; Smokum was twenty-three, Seasick twenty-two. Smokum held no hard feelings. In his way of thinking, malice and hatred not only made life shorter but took the best out of it. He regretted the fight after it was over—which is the way of the ordinary American bluejacket.

But Seasick Boswell was no ordinary bluejacket. If it be true that blond hair

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and light blue eyes are rarely indicative of a vindictive temperament, then Seasick was a paradox. With all the venom of his nature he began hating Smokum Buckner. And he hated him more and more. Every glimpse of Smokum served but to add a fagot to the fire that raged beneath Seasick's flaxen hair. His was that deep-rooted, poisonous white hate that crawls and corrodes and consumes like a cancer. Had he been imaginative and impulsive it might ultimately have vented itself in murder. But Seasick was cold-blooded. He nursed his hatred, cherished it, fed it; and bided his time.

Months passed. Many times Smokum sought to make friends again. Once, when he overheard Seasick asking another shipmate for a loan which the shipmate refused, Smokum stepped up and proffered his roll. But Seasick only looked him up and down with those cold, calculating blue eyes and not so much as said, "No, thanks." Smokum's every smile and word was met with that same frigid look. Another time, one cold wintry night off Bar Harbor, Maine, Seasick, coming up to relieve Smokum at the wheel, complained in an aside to the quartermaster of having a toothache. It was midnight, and Smokum had been steering since eight o'clock. Yet he offered to stand Seasick's watch. As well might he have made the offer to an image of stone.

The discharge of a quartermaster left a vacancy in that department, an opportunity for some seaman to become a petty officer. Seasick put in for the billet, requesting examination for quartermaster third-class. The navigationg officer, who has direct supervision over the quartermasters, summoned him and told him that he was sorry but the billet and promotion had been promised to Smokum.

Smokum then did what not many shipmates would do. He turned down the promotion, flatly refused it.

"What's the idea!" the navigator demanded. "You requested the billet six months ago. Now when we offer it to you, you refuse it! Why?"

"I don't want it, sir," Smokum answered.

The navigator was offended.

"Very well," he snapped. "But don't ever make another request for promotion while on this ship!"

Seasick got the billet. He passed the examination and was advanced to the rate of quartermaster third-class. But by neither word nor look did he ever give thanks to Smokum. If anything he hated Smokum more intensely for having helped obtain him the promotion.

ON A man-of-war the quartermaster on watch is the assistant of the officer of the deck. At anchor he stands his watch on the quarter-deck, makes hourly record of weather conditions in the log-book, and helps direct the ship's routine. The "brains of the ship" are these two. At sea the ship shifts her brains to the bridge. Then the quartermaster's paramount duty is playing boss over the helmsman.

Some quartermasters, themselves only mediocre helmsmen, like to air their little all by standing up at the standard compass on the flying-bridge and bawling down to the seaman at the wheel every time he gets a degree or two off his course. One of these inflated jackasses was Seasick Boswell, particularly when Smokum had the wheel. When these two were on duty together, it was, "Watch your steering! Watch your steering! Right two! Left one! Steady!" from the beginning of the watch to the end.

This was galling to the ardent-tempered Smokum, who was a far better helmsman than Seasick Boswell ever would be. Standing there at the wheel, listening to that nagging chatter from above him, Smokum's dark eyes would shoot fire and he would redden. But he kept from flaring up.

It was that proneness to flare up in Smokum's nature that Seasick was playing on. Smokum flared up quickly. His red moments wouldn't last long, but while they lasted they were red. He would call a man some terrible names for a few moments, then apologize. And that was Seasick's game—to draw Smokum's fire. If he could force Smokum to "blow up," call him some of those choice names, on duty, before a few witnesses, he could then bring Smokum before the captain. And the captain of that ship was a religious fanatic who regarded swearing as a crime. Seasick had a vague hope of piloting Smokum to a general court-martial.

But Smokum saw through this, finally. It came to him one afternoon nearing the end of a watch that Seasick's nagging had rendered anything but pleasant. After

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coming off duty he buttonholed Seasick on the forecastle.

"Look here, Seasick," Smokum put it straight to him. "I think I see through your game now. And get this—You can't put it over! You're a petty officer now, and I'm still a seaman; but that only counts while we're on board. If you don't keep your dirty trap shut while I'm up at that wheel—you and I are goin' to meet ashore some time—and there won't be any *quit* this time! We'll fight till one or the other or both of us goes to the hospital!"

Seasick made straight for the executive officer's stateroom.

"Threatened to put you in the hospital!" exclaimed the executive officer.

"Yes, sir," Seasick blabbed indignantly. "And merely because I'm trying to do my duty, sir! I don't say, sir, that Buckner isn't a good helmsman; but I know that he only half tries, when he's on watch with me. He hates me and wants to see me disrated for incompetence. He lets the ship fall off her course, knowing it'll reflect on me, sir. And because I tell him about it he threatens to put me in the hospital, the first time we meet ashore.

"He's too much for me in a fist fight," he added. "We settled that some time ago. That's why I come to you, sir."

The upshot of this was a trip aft before the captain for Smokum.

"Just what do you mean, Buckner," asked the captain, "by threatening to put a petty officer in the hospital?"

"I didn't sir," Smokum replied. "I told him if he didn't let up on me and play fair, we'd meet ashore some time and fight till one or the other or both of us goes to the hospital."

"Hm," grunted the captain. "Well, that amounts to the same thing. Five days solitary confinement on bread and water!"

Bread and water! Not Smokum Buckner. He had too many shipmates aboard. He had two shipmates in particular. One of these was a little monkey named Feedum. The other was a big Irishman, Denny Deegan by name, who owned Feedum and who, whispered rumor had it, was the father of Feedum. They looked so much alike, this Irishman and his monkey.

It was the boast of the chief master-at-arms on that ship, that his brig was food-proof, cigaret-proof, booze-proof; that a prisoner serving a bread-and-water sentence got bread and water, and just that. Little recked he with little Feedum and big Denny Deegan.

Late each night, and every night during those five days of Smokum's incarceration, up at the forecastle rail directly over the brig porthole, which was far down near the water-line, Deegan passed a loop of line around Feedum's tiny body just below the armpits, and then lowered him down over the ship's side to the barred porthole. Strings of frankfurters, sausages, sandwiches, pies, cigarets little Feedum brought down and passed through the bars to Smokum.

Smokum came out of the brig so fed up and rested up that he felt the need of action. It was Saturday, and the ship was now anchored in port, Newport, R. I., so he put in for shore liberty till the following Monday.

This happened back in B. P. times, when it wasn't a crime for a man to quench his thirst. And Smokum was a very thirsty boy, ashore. In fact, at times his wantonness of thirst outran his capacity; and then his perceptive faculties grew numb long before his thirst left him.

So it was that Saturday afternoon in Newport. He got off to a good start. From noon till about three o'clock his mental engine functioned smoothly; he was hitting on all five, so to speak—all five senses. Then objects of vision gradually lost sharpness of detail. Later things grew hazy. Later still he began to experience long lapses and leaps of consciousness, in which, somehow, he seemed to bridge time and space. He was continually changing places, without being conscious of movement or the passing of time. He was here one moment, somewhere else the next.

You could never prove by Smokum Buckner how came he to be up there on top of that ice wagon. All he can tell you to this day is that he was *there*, on top of an ice wagon, waving his arms and kicking up his heels, delivering an uproarious and high-falutin' speech to a mob of people. Whatever he had been saying must have been funny, for the mob applauded and laughed.

There were policemen, a half-dozen of them, surrounding the ice wagon, shouting up at him to come down. Smokum would have obliged them, but just at that moment, out in the mob a ways, he saw the white face of Seasick Boswell.

In that moment Smokum passed through another lightning change of places.

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In the jostle and surge of the hilarious mob, Seasick was having trouble holding his feet. To Smokum he appeared to be swimming. By some hallucinatory twist he perceived Seasick to be drowning, struggling in the water, calling for help.

"Whoopee! Man overboard!" shouted Smokum—and dived head first from on top of the ice wagon.

IN THE long run, perhaps what happened was for the best. That dive to the sidewalk might have been a preordained chapter of Smokum's evolution. No one can prove it wasn't.

He was in a bed when he returned to a state of knowing, his head and face all done up tight in bandages. Instantly he recognized his surroundings. The smell of the place alone would have told him he was in a hospital. Then he saw a uniform or two and knew it was a naval hospital.. And, remembering that his ship was at Newport, where there was a naval hospital, he drew the natural inference ——

"Went ashore, got drunk, got beat up, and carried to the hospital."

He rolled his eyes up and down the long ward. Everything was snow-white—walls, ceiling, the two rows of enameled beds, the clothing lockers. Down near the other end was a lad in a wheel chair talking to another with his arm in a sling. Some patients sat up in bed reading, others lay staring vacantly at the white ceiling. The smell of the air was not good. Every one spoke in a whisper.

After a while a pharmacist's mate came, spoke a few words to Smokum, then bade him open his mouth while he inserted therein a thermometer, after which he took hold of Smokum's wrist and began timing his pulse. Above the ticking of the watch in the other's hand Smokum heard the distant toll of church bells. It was Sunday. And with that he went back into the vague fringe of yesterday.

Yesterday he had gone ashore —

"Say, sailor," he inquired, when the pharmacist's mate had finished taking his pulse and temperature, "what kind of a bonehead did I pull yesterday?"

"Yesterday?" The P.M. smiled. "Why, nothing. In fact you haven't done anything in a good many yesterdays."

Smokum studied him for a few moments.

"Oh, come off, come off," he growled. "I went ashore yesterday at noon and ——"

The P.M. laughed. "Don't you believe it, old socks. That was three weeks ago yesterday."

The P.M. then left the ward. He returned shortly with two doctors. One was a big heavy-set man with a thick black beard which he stroked meditatively as he fixed his black eyes on Smokum. The other was smooth-skinned and boyish looking. But the way they looked in his eyes as they bent over him made Smokum feel uncomfortable.

"Say, lad," said the younger doctor, "what was the idea? You were drunk, of course. But what were you trying to do?"

"That's what I'd like to find out, sir," Smokum answered. "Seems to me I went overboard after a man in the water. Fellow named Seasick Boswell."

"Did you see water? You really thought you were diving?"

Smokum didn't comprehend quite. There, the break in consciousness had been sharp. That is, between those two moments, the moment of his standing on top of the ice wagon orating to the mob, and the moment in which he saw Seasick in the water, drowning, calling for help, was a blank space. They were two separate experiences, or states. And yet, strangely, they seemed closely connected in memory.

"Why—" he stammered—"I must have seen water. Didn't I dive?"

The two doctors looked at each other.

"Any precedent?" asked the younger one.

The bearded one shrugged. "Why, yes. They jump from the tops of buildings."

"Yes, but that's usually premeditated."

"Oh, not necessarily. They never live to tell us. For aught we know, the man who jumped from a dozen or fifteen stories might have taken a sudden alcoholic notion he had wings. Or he might have had a sudden lapse of memory, in which he forgot the law of gravitative forces. Again, just as the lad here, he might have seen water. I've known them to see queerer things than that."

"You're positive you saw water?" the younger one asked Smokum again.

Smokum glared at him a moment.

"Water, yes, sir," he growled. "I saw water. Whether it was wet water or not I don't know, because I don't remember feeling of it."

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Which brought a smile to both doctor's faces. They walked away, thoughtfully, one stroking his beard; the other twiddling his thumbs behind him.

"SAY, what are they ravin' about?" Smokum demanded of the P.M. "Did I see water!"

"Why, you dove head first from on top of an ice wagon to the sidewalk."

"You're crazy. That was a different time. I remember makin' a speech from on top of the ice wagon, but that wasn't when I went in the water for Seasick Bos——"

Smokum stopped. For a few moments he battled mentally with that moment—or rather, those two disconnected moments.

"Say, sailor," he grinned finally, "come to think of it I did see Seasick Boswell while I was up on top of that wagon." He paused. "——! How bad am I hurt?"

"You cracked your skull. You must have stuck out your hands when you dove and broke your fall. I guess you're all right inside. But this is the first time I've thought so in three weeks."

Smokum was silent for a space.

"What's the dope?" he asked finally.

"Well, we've broken relations with Germany, for one thing. There's oodles of war talk. Your ship is gone. You won't go back to her. All your records, and bag and hammock are here. You'll probably be here for a couple of months."

"And then I suppose they'll shoot me up for a general court martial. They'll say I tried to commit suicide. But honest ——, sailor, I thought I was jumpin' in the water to save Seasick Boswell from drowning. ——the rum. Believe me, I'll go light on that stuff after this!"

The pharmacist's mate laughed.

"Oh, I wouldn't worry, old socks. You didn't do much. Court martial! Say, in another month this Navy is going to be too busy to monkey with such little things!"

WE MUST skip a year. What happened in that year everybody knows. Smokum had re-enlisted shortly after coming out of the hospital, and was now on the destroyer *Bentham*, a long, lean little greyhound of twelve hundred tons, which had already done much to throw the fear of Sammy into Mustache Billy's undersea terrors. Smokum was still a seaman. The ice wagon episode was indelibly red-inked on his record, and had held him down.

One day in the Spring of 1918, in New York for a few days rest-up after a strenuous convoy across the Atlantic, Smokum came rolling down Broadway. Talking to a blue-eyed flapper on a downtown corner stood Seasick Boswell, his long chin held high and the point of his flexible nose quivering proudly in the sunshine.

Seasick was now Chief Quartermaster Boswell, U. S. N. Promotion was rapid during the war for men with clean noses. Besides, Seasick was a consummate handshaker and white mouse.

He turned his head away when he saw Smokum—but too late.

"Hello, Seasick!" Smokum's voice rose above the roaring traffic. "Say —" He halted, his dark eyes flashing up and down over Seasick's cap, brass-buttoned coat of blue serge and creased trousers. "They ain't a bit particular who they rate chief nowadays, are they?"

Seasick raised the point of his haughty chin and sniffed disdainfully. This meeting was not to his liking. He didn't care to have his little flapper friend see him talking to such scum, a common seaman. He had told her he was an officer proper. He didn't want her to know he was merely and only a chief petty officer, an enlisted man. But there was no shaking Smokum with a look.

"What ship now, Seasick?" he pestered.

In the hope of getting rid of him, Seasick replied—

"Shore duty—recruiting."

Smokum stared at him a moment.

"Recruitin' duty! What, *now?*"

And the way Smokum uttered that word "now" hurt. It meant so much. As well might he have said, "Are you afraid of the submarines?" And then Smokum added:

"Boy, you're missin' half your life! We dropped an egg on a Fritzy last week. We must've got him, 'cause all we saw when we looked back was oil. And so you're on recruitin' duty."

Seasick's face was scarlet. He looked very warm and uncomfortable. Perhaps he *was* afraid of the submarines. For what other reason could he have worked the wires for recruiting duty, when the nation was at war? He stammered out meekly—

"They shanghaied me to shore duty."

"Ye-ah?" and Smokum grinned a grin

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that went to Seasick's roots, for it drew a giggle from the little flapper beside him. "Well—" Smokum bowed profoundly to the giggling flapper, "*Au revoir.*" Then he dealt Seasick a dig in the ribs and went rolling on his way down clattering Broadway, leaving it up to Seasick to explain by what code of naval ethics such common scum dared be so familiar with his superior.

THE ice wagon affair kept Smokum a seaman for a long time, till near the end of the war. Throughout that first year of the war he saw raw rookies, some of them with the hay-seed still in their hair, come into the service and sprout right up to petty officers, chief petty officers, and commissioned officers, while he stayed in the rut. Then one day, about the time Kultured Billy began twisting his mustache downward, the *Bentham* got a new commanding officer. From then on Smokum had better luck.

A clean and clean-cut little man was Commander Hodge, the *Bentham's* new skipper. He was short, slight of build, with an easy, catlike litheness of movement that belied his forty-six years. He had strong, regular features, smooth dark skin, straight and glossy brown hair and large gray eyes that bespoke a powerful intellect and will, and a deep human understanding.

What caused him to immediately take notice of Smokum was Smokum's excellent steering.

When the periscope of a submarine showed, the trick was *full speed ahead*, straight for it. Then a quick and accurate calculation, or rather a good guess. From his own speed, and a rough estimate of the distance and speed of the submerging periscope, the commander of the destroyer's problem was: How deep would the submarine be when he got directly over her? This determined, he had only to keep going and set the depth bomb to explode at the proper depth.

It's an intense moment. All hands are on their toes, breathless, eyes on the sinking periscope ahead. She fairly flies through the water, the spray gushing up in spumes before her bows and sweeping with a hiss across her topside. Down goes the periscope ahead, till she's gone, submerged. But the destroyer holds straight on, with every foot-pound of her engines, till she's directly over the spot where the submarine disappeared (where the water still shows some slight commotion) and then she drops the depth bomb from her stern end.

As the depth bomb sinks, the force or pressure of the water caused its propeller to revolve. This propeller screws down on an electric contact inside, which contact explodes the depth charge. This propeller attachment is adjustable, can be set to contact and explode the charge at any depth.

But the trick took something besides speed, calculation and a good guess. No less important a factor than any of these was the steering of the ship. The helmsman must get his eye on that fast disappearing periscope, and be able to hold her dead on. And there Smokum Buckner shone.

Wind, tide, the run of the sea—nothing could fool Smokum when he gripped those wheel spokes. Let her carry helm as she would, port or starboard, she couldn't get away from him. Smokum had the *Bentham* at his finger's ends. Put a watermelon out there in the water a mile off, give Smokum the wheel, start the *Bentham* ahead at full speed, and Smokum could have cut the watermelon in half with the *Bentham's* cutwater!

Thus had he drawn the attention of Commander Hodge. Never had that officer seen such perfect steering. He began holding long talks with Smokum at the wheel. He noted that no matter how interested he might be in a conversation, Smokum never let the ship fall off her course. He appeared to steer by instinct. It seemed that the ship and Smokum knew each other; she steadied down the instant he took the wheel, and remained steady till he turned it over to the next man.

Ice wagons and red ink notwithstanding, Smokum went up the ladder. Commander Hodge soon advanced him to the rate of quartermaster third-class. A month later he rated him second-class; a month after that, first-class. Another step upward and Smokum would be a chief quartermaster, with the cap and brass-buttoned coat, and the bunk instead of the hammock to sleep in—and neck and neck with Seasick Boswell.

"You understand, Buckner," said the captain, the day he advanced Smokum to first-class, "I can't rate you chief till after you've been first-class for three months. That's the regulation." He smiled, adding—"Meanwhile, better keep off the tops of ice wagons."

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"Likewise off the stuff that makes me climb ice wagons," Smokum grinned.

A close bond grew between these two. They became pals. Like two fingers of one hand they worked in perfect unison and harmony—to make the world safe for Democracy.

And it *was* work, in those wild months. They were ever on their toes. They slept with one eye open and one ear a-cock. Stream after stream of America's khaki-clad "button busters" they helped convoy across the submarine-infested Atlantic. It was pitch and roll, from week to week and month to month, in rain and shine and fog, in storm and calm—ever going, galloping, running rings around the column of transports, zigzagging, crisscrossing, cutting in across the column between the stem of one ship and the stern of the one ahead, leaving the formation to go racing for the horizon at thirty, thirty-two knots, to see what could be seen.

ONE late afternoon the *Bentham* was far away from the convoy, scouting the hoop of the horizon. It had been a gray day, with black clouds hovering low, and now, with dusk shutting down, little could be seen. The sea was choppy, and the little shell-like craft plunged along in a whirl of foam and spray.

Out on the starboard bridge-wing Commander Hodge hung over the rail. His condition was somewhat like that of a man on the verge of delirium tremens. He was a sickly yellow, deep hollows and black rings encircled his eyes, and the muscles of his face twitched and quivered, as did his fingers clutching at the rail. For thirty-six hours he had been drinking black coffee to keep awake, and now Nature was collecting toll.

Somewhere off in the gathering gloom, running parallel with the convoy was an undersea sneak. Twice she had been sighted, twice she had fired torpedoes, one the afternoon before, one this morning. Luckily both had missed. Unluckily both times she had submerged and made her getaway. She was still there, somewhere, creeping along like a snake in the grass.

Commander Hodge jumped like a man on springs when one of his radio operators touched his elbow and said "Message, sir."

It was an order from the flag-ship to return to the convoy. The commander turned and shouted to Smokum at the wheel—

"Left rudder, Buckner." In the Navy the expressions "port helm, starboard helm" are no longer used.

Smokum didn't obey that order. In that moment above the roar and hiss of wind and wave broke the muffled clang of the engine-room gong. And following close upon that came the rumble and clatter of the steam steering-engine, which, on the *Bentham*, was directly below the bridge.

"Buckner! Buckner! What are you doing!" shouted the commander.

Smokum had rung up *full speed astern* on the starboard engine, and was now spinning the wheel for all he was worth with his left hand, while with his right the pointed off to starboard. Commander Hodge looked.

There it was, or rather, there it came—a racing streak of white that spelled destruction. And how it came! Scarce could the eye follow its lightning passage through the water. It was broad off the starboard bow, five hundred yards away, and coming like a bullet at right angles to the *Bentham's* course.

Responding to the backing starboard propeller and the full helm Smokum had given her, the *Bentham* careened. So far over did she lay, and so abrupt was it, that it was a miracle no one went overboard. The water swirled and thundered under her stern end, as the two propellers, working in opposition, churned into it. She quivered and vibrated from end to end as she pivoted, dead in the water.

Clinging to the rail like a monkey to a limb, Commander Hodge watched that white streak of death pass, within a ship's length, and disappear in the gray gloom to the westward. Then he leaped as leaps a man coming out of a nightmare to the center of the bridge.

Another muffled clamor of the engine-room gong as Smokum grasped the handle of the starboard annunciator and jammed it it forward to *full speed ahead*, and the *Bentham* was racing under the full thrust of both engines, coming round in a wide circle for that compass-point on the horizon whence the deadly little device had issued.

"—— it, Buckner! Direct disobedience!" shouted the commander; and then, picking up a megaphone, turned loose a torrent of orders to the deck below.

Gongs jangled. For a few moments all

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was confusion. Officers and gobs poured up out of the hatches and went galloping forward and aft. But every one knew where to go. There were a few collisions, heads-ons, for the decks of a destroyer are not spacious. But no one had time to stop and growl at the one who bumped into him. In less than a minute every man was at general quarters. All guns were manned, all spotters aloft, and, save for the hiss and swish of the flying spray, silence reigned. That's the Navy.

The *Bentham* was on even keel now, a white bone in her teeth, scudding like a seabird swooping down upon its prey. Steering with his left hand, Smokum was holding her to within a hair's breadth of her course. He stood on his toes, and with his right hand held a pair of binoculars up to his eyes. He was steering by what he saw through those binoculars, which was a tiny speck far out near the gray horizon—the periscope of the undersea Fritzy who had turned loose that torpedo.

"Direct disobedience!" Commander Hodge again shouted in his ear. "Can you see her, lad?"

Smokum nodded. "Dead ahead, sir, about a mile. She's goin' down fast!"

The commander jumped over to the row of voice-tubes and rang up the engine room.

"Give us all you've got for a few minutes!" he thundered into the tube. He turned—"Direct disobedience!" he snapped at Smokum, and then danced out on the port wing. Through his megaphone he shouted to the group at the depth bomb far aft at the stern end—

"Stand by!"

"Better come over to port a bit, Buckner," shouted an officer spotter from up on the flying bridge.

"You let Buckner alone!" Commander Hodge roared up at him.

"I'm headin' for a little ahead of her, sir," Smokum spoke up. "She's movin' south."

A few minutes of roar and splash. The *Bentham* swooped down upon the sinking periscope. She had a thousand yards to go when the periscope disappeared.

"She's gone, sir!" chorused a half-dozen voices.

For another long minute the *Bentham* pounded onward.

"That's well, sir!" came in unison from the spotter on the flying bridge and the one on the after search-light platform.

"Let go!" Commander Hodge roared aft.

From her stern end the *Bentham* dropped her big cylindrical egg. Then she swerved in a wide crescent. A tumultuous upheaval of water in her wake, a moment later, showed the gobs crowding her upper decks where their depth charge had been dropped.

When she drifted on momentum back to that spot, they saw oil floating on the surface. That was all they wanted to see. Nine out of ten times that was all the undersea *Fritzalina* left behind her—oil.

THAT evening Commander Hodge summoned Smokum to his cabin.

"Buckner," he said, "did you hear me call out 'Left rudder' just before you did that 'Ship's right' stunt?"

Smokum didn't answer.

"Well?" The commander drummed impatiently on the table. "And none of that Nelson stuff about not seeing signals! Don't tell me you didn't hear me!"

Smokum reddened. "Why, certainly I heard you, sir!" he flared up. "But we never could have pivoted her to the left in time to clear that torpedo! I haven't been handling this ship a year and a half for nothing, sir. If you want to pivot her quick, you've got to do it to the right. She backs strongest with her starboard engine."

"Oh-o-o-o," the commander pronounced with utmost distinctness. "In other words you thought that I saw that torpedo and was bonehead enough to try to pivot her to the left.

"I knew you couldn't do it, sir. She won't pivot to the left, not in a hurry."

The commander laughed.

"Say, lad, I never saw the —— torpedo till after you'd thrown the wheel over and gonged the engine room. I gave you 'left rudder' because I'd just received an order from the flag-ship to return to the convoy."

They both laughed.

"But the point is," the commander went on, "you disobeyed that order. —— good thing you did, too." He paused, glaring hard at Smokum. "But you'd better not disobey this one! Get your nose in a book. I'll give you just two months to prepare yourself to take the examination for Ensign. That's an order."

Smokum was staggered for a moment. Then he grinned.

"I couldn't make it, Captain. I haven't

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got education enough to be an officer. If I make chief quartermaster when my three months are up, I'll be satisfied, sir."

"That's it," snapped the commander. "You'll be satisfied! That's the trouble with ninety-nine per cent of you service men! Ever since this war has been on you've been letting a lot of high school Johnnies come in here and scoop off the cream on you. Here's opportunity staring you in the face, and you're too timid to grab at it!"

"But, captain, I never even finished high school! They kicked me out in my third year for skylarking."

"I don't care if you never even finished the kindergarten. You heard the order. Be ready for that examination in two months. I'll help you. So will the rest of the officers on this ship—or I'll know why."

"But that ice wagon ——"

"To —— with that ice wagon affair!" the commander cut him off. "If those people in Washington throw that at me, I'll throw something at them—the battle of Santiago!"

BUT Smokum's promotion miscarried.

Of course everybody was glad on that big day in November, 1918. The whole world was glad. But from Smokum Buckner's point of view they signed that armistice a few weeks too soon. He had passed the examination for Ensign and was expecting his appointment any minute, when that great day came. And then, alas for Smokum, Washington quit making officers out of nobodies, and he was left high and dry, still a gob, but a petty officer first-class, with the hope of making chief, if the gods were kind.

At the close of the war, along with many others, the doughty little *Bentham* was consigned to the scrap heap. Her crew were scattered about like a flurry of snow flakes. Smokum got in a draft that went overland to the Pacific coast. Commander Hodge was detached to duty in the Navy Department.

It was a blue moment for Smokum when he bade that valiant little officer good-by, at the gate of the Brooklyn navy-yard.

"It's tough stuff, sir," said Smokum, as they shook hands. "Just when we get goin' good together they split us."

"Yes," the commander smiled. "But that's the service, lad. We're not supposed to have any human emotions. But we'll get together again some time. I'm going to the department now for a short tour of duty. Possibly I'll be able to do something for you down there in connection with that rank you almost landed. You merit it. Anyhow, I've appended a letter to your enlistment record that'll help you make the rate of chief quartermaster."

They said good-by.

"Stay off the tops of ice wagons, Buckner," the commander called back.

So went Smokum with a whole lot of gobs, over the Pennsylvania road to St. Louis, then over the Burlington to Kansas City, then over the Santa Fé to San Francisco.

Somewhere between New York and San Francisco, from some one, Smokum purchased a motion-picture camera and outfit. Whether he had bought that outfit with a view to making some money, or merely to have some fun with, he could no more remember than could he remember what he had paid for it, so moist and hazy was that trip. At any rate he had the machine, a perfectly good outfit in a compact leather case, when the train pulled in to Oakland on San Francisco Bay.

On the receiving-ship at San Francisco, which is at Yerba Buena Island, or "Goat" Island, in San Francisco Bay, Smokum hung around for a few weeks, dodging work and saluting officers in the daytime and rambling around 'Frisco in the evenings. This duty was congenial to Smokum. But it didn't last. One day the commandant's yeoman called him to the office.

"Say, Buckner, you're going out to the Asiatic Fleet," he informed. "To the *Rapaho*."

"The *Rapaho?*"

"One of those old scows the government grabbed during the war," the yeoman explained. "She does the roundy-go-roundy out there—sort of a transport, gunboat and cruiser combined. Makes a round trip every three months between Manila, Guam, Japan, China and Siberia. It's good duty."

"But how is she fixed for a chief quartermaster?" Smokum queried. "I'd like a ship with a vacancy."

"You're getting one. That's the reason the commandant is sending you to the *Rapaho*, account of that letter glued to your enlistment record, from Commander Hodge, recommending that you be sent to some

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ship with a vacancy for a chief quartermaster, so as to give you a chance to make the rate."

"I should have made chief on the *Bentham*," Smokum said. "That was a mistake, shooting me up for Ensign. Of course, Commander Hodge was trying to do me a favor; but in trying to make me an officer he knocked my chances for making chief quartermaster. I tried to tell him the chief's rate was all I wanted, but he wouldn't have it."

"Well, you'll soon make chief on the *Rapaho*," the yeoman assured him. "Anyhow, be ready to go aboard the army transport *Logan* over at the army dock in 'Frisco, tomorrow morning. She makes Honolulu, Guam and the Islands; and somewhere out there she'll connect with the *Rapaho*."

IN THE seven days traverse between San Francisco and Honolulu, the first leg of the Army Transport *Logan's* long voyage, with the help of nearly everybody on board —civil engineers, army, navy and marine officers, missionaries, Y. M. C. A. men and women and soldiers, bluejackets and marines—Smokum penetrated and mastered the intricacies of his motion-picture apparatus and got it hitting on all six.

So far as that voyage was concerned, Smokum's outfit turned out a good investment.

A few of the young ladies up on "Highbrow Deck," wives and daughters of some of the military higher-ups aboard, got their literary heads together and stewed up a deep-sea romance. They cribbed the best scenes out of the best sea books aboard, kneaded them all together into a sort of meat-ball, and called it "A Woman of the Waves." Then a committee of the fair ones waited on the captain of the *Logan* and intrigued him into transferring Smokum, bag, hammock and kinetograph, from the evil-smelling and miserable steerage to the perfumed and velvety first cabin.

This was most soft for Smokum. He was given a cozy little stateroom up on Highbrow Deck, and a place at the ladies' table. He hadn't a thing to do but feast and dream and be petted by the beautiful ladies.

But, alas for "A Woman of the Waves," it was never screened. The show blew up owing to the young ladies' inability to agree on the cast of characters. The leading man in this masterpiece, being a tall, broad and handsome young army officer, naturally all the fair ones wanted the rôle of heroine. It didn't quite develop into a free-for-all hair-pulling melee; but it came pretty close to that.

Smokum, however, carried on in the ease of his state-room and on the fat of the first cabin dining-room throughout the second leg of the voyage, from Honolulu to Guam, a distance of three thousand miles. The *Rapaho*, his future home, was anchored in Apra Harbor, Guam, when the *Logan* arrived there. So there ended his pleasure cruise.

Scrutinizing her from the *Logan's* upper deck, entering the harbor, Smokum saw little about the *Rapaho* to appeal to the eye of a man-of-war's man. She was nothing more than a converted tramp of three thousand tons, built like thousands of other tramps—with a short, high forecastle forward, a long bridge deck amidships and a poop aft, the three separated by two well decks, forward and aft. She still had on her coat of war-time camouflage. She mounted a few light guns.

SMOKUM was perspiring freely when he dropped his bag and hammock and motion-picture machine on the *Rapaho's* quarter-deck that afternoon. For not only did his bag and hammock and machine constitute a weighty and unwieldy burden, but it was a long way from the water up to the *Rapaho's* quarter-deck. She differed from a man-of-war proper in that her official quarter-deck was not aft but up on the topside, on the promenade deck amidships, since she was built to carry cargo and passengers, not to fight.

The officer of the deck took Smokum's orders, grinned when Smokum explained that his big leather case contained a motion-picture outfit, and then turned him over to the quartermaster on watch, a third-class man. This youngster shook hands with Smokum, told him where to sling his bag and hammock, and gave him the lay of things.

"She's a good ship," he told Smokum. "You'll make chief on 'er easy. Good skipper, good exec., good feeder and lots of liberty. There's only one bad egg aboard; one rotten officer—"

He broke off as the officer of the deck

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called him. "See you later," he added hurrying away. "There's two others in our gang. You'll find 'em forward somewheres."

Smokum went forward, slung his bag to the jack-stay and stowed his hammock in the netting. Then he toted his picture apparatus up to the chart house, which is the usual hangout for the quartermasters, at anchor. Here he found the other two members of the gang, both quartermasters second-class. They answered to the names of "Stretch" and "Shrimp."

Stretch was somewhat of an oldster, as gobs go, tall, gaunt, stiff, awkward, with a long, simple face set with bleak blue eyes and a forehead that stretched away at a sharp slant and reached up over and down to the back of his neck. His head looked like a polished egg. Shrimp was made along the lines of a bantam rooster, short and shanky and cocky, and had a face that resembled an eagle's. But they both had the earmarks of good shipmates, and Smokum liked them.

They told Smokum what the quartermaster on watch at the gangway had told him; that she was a good ship, a rambling home, only for one thing—an officer who was an ensign, a "war baby."

"But what's one officer?" laughed Smokum. "What matters a little pup of an ensign on a well-found ship?"

"Well yuh see," drawled Stretch, "he's in our department!"

"He's junior navigator," added Shrimp, "which makes him our boss."

"He's like a rotten apple in a barrel," Stretch put in.

And then, just as Smokum was about to ask the name of this rotten apple, the rotten apple stepped into the chart house. He halted, chin high, and stood looking down at Smokum over the quivering point of a very long nose. It was Smokum's old friend, Seasick Boswell, all decked out in starched and spotless officer's whites, with a broad gold band on his shoulders and another across his cap above the vizor.

Smokum sagged.

"Well I'll be ——," he growled.

ONCE, long before, Smokum, then attached to the receiving-ship at Norfolk, Virginia, had been detailed as a guard to escort a prisoner down to the naval prison, or disciplinary barracks at Port Royal, South Carolina. And just as the officer in command of the prison had looked at the newly arrived prisoner—just so did Ensign Boswell look at him, Smokum Buckner now.

"Is that any way to address an officer?"

Mr. Boswell wiggled the point of his nose, after putting the question, and then, after fixing Smokum for a moment with his cold blue eyes, stepped over to the desk and began consulting a chart.

Smokum didn't trust himself to make reply. But his dark smoldering eyes spoke volumes of desire, as did his fists clenched at his sides.

"It will be to your particular benefit," Mr. Boswell smiled his way out, "to observe all the rules and traditions of the service when addressing me hereafter."

"Say—" Smokum then cut loose to Stretch and Shrimp. "Don't tell me *that's* an officer! Don't tell me I have to say 'sir' to *him!*"

"He's the war baby we was talkin' about," answered Shrimp.

"War baby!" Smokum was warm. "He's not even that! War! That slacker? He never saw any of the war! Why, the moment things got rough he sneaked for a shore job! I tell you, I know! During those whole eighteen months he never even got his feet wet! Say 'sir' to him! Me? Say, how do I get to see the captain?"

"You can't now," answered Stretch. "He holds request in the mornin's."

"Gettin' an audience out of hours with this old man is as hard as gettin' one with the kaiser was, before they clipped his mustache," Shrimp put in.

"That so?" Smokum was red-hot now. "Watch me! There ain't room for Seasick Boswell and me on the biggest ship ever was built! I want a transfer to some other ship in the Asiatics, and I want it right now, before that *Logan* gets out of the harbor! Why, with that guy wearing gold on his shoulders I'd be sweeping navy-yard streets with a marine behind me in no time!"

Smokum didn't bother with the formality of getting the executive officer's permission to speak to the captain. He simply went hunting for the captain. He found him back aft on the bridge deck.

A very ordinary appearing man, in his early thirties, of medium height and goodly build was Lieutenant Thorpe, the *Rapaho's* commander. The most impressive thing about him was the humorous flicker in his

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hazel eyes. His ruddy face always appeared about to laugh.

He laughed now, as Smokum put his request.

"A transfer! Well, say lad, why not wait till you're aboard?"

"Because, sir," Smokum pointed to the *Logan*, a half-mile across the harbor, "I want to go out on her. She leaves this evening."

"But what have you got against *this* ship?"

"Nothing, sir. Only this —" And beginning with that affair of the pair of black and holy socks of two years before, Smokum brough the narrative right up to the present moment.

"There's no chance on this ship for me with him aboard, sir," he finished. "He's an officer now and draws too much water for me."

Lieutenant Thorpe smiled and shook his head.

"Buckner," he said, "you just forget all that. You know, the more you think of troubles the bigger they get. Do what you're supposed to do and you'll have no trouble on this ship. Take charge of the signal and quartermaster departments, get a grip on your job, get things running smoothly—and we'll soon make you a chief quartermaster.

"That's a fine letter Commander Hodge attached to your enlistment record," he went on. "If you try half as hard on this ship as you did on the *Bentham*, you'll have clear sailing.

"As for the 'drawing water' part of it," he added, "it's past performances that draw water with me." He paused a moment, then grinning, added: "And I don't mean the ice wagon escapade."

Smokum shifted his weight to the other leg. Was there no getting away from that ice wagon affair!

"I see you've been looking over my record, sir," he grinned. "But that makes things look a lot different." He scratched the back of his neck. "I don't think, sir. that I want a transfer now."

"And by the way," the skipper broke off, "as long as you're to be acting chief you may as well have all the advantages that go with the job. Go to the executive officer's yeoman and tell him to give you a bunk in the chief petty officers' quarters and a place on that mess."

Hence a different Smokum rejoined Shrimp and Stretch in the chart house.

"Say, guys," he burst in upon them, "I'm chief quartermaster all but the cap and brass buttons and the increase in pay!"

THINGS went along well with Smokum on the *Rapaho*. As acting chief quartermaster he had the care and order of the steering gear, the chart house and the navigator's storeroom, all the navigation instruments: Chronometers, sextants, binoculars, the sounding machines, patent logs, hand leads, signal flags. Also he had the correcting of the charts; sailing directions, light, buoy and beacon lists to keep corrected up to date. But this was light, interesting work. And he had an efficient gang, three quartermasters and eight signalmen, every man of whom knew his job and did his best, without being told. The department ran itself.

Smokum had to take the wheel only when entering or coming out of port. Other times he was a gentleman of leisure, the spokesman of his gang and the recipient, or, strictly, the relayer of his gang's bawling-outs.

The only thing that came hard was being constrained to salute and say "sir" to that inflated and effeminate jackass, Boswell. This went against the grain. Smokum would rather have taken a punch on the nose any day, than bow down humble before a four flusher for whom he could feel nothing but contempt.

However, there was something cheering in the knowledge that Seasick, like ninety per cent. of the war babies, was an officer only temporarily. Those appointments had been authorized in the heave and stress of the war when the Navy Department was swamped with ships and there was a crying need for officers. They made commissioned officers by making the examination so easy that any bright youngster with a high school education could pass it, the understanding being that these ranks were to hold good only for the duration of the war. After the war each and every war baby must either put up or give up—pass the examination proper or drop back to where he had been before things got rough. And that let Seasick Boswell out, Smokum knew; for Seasick didn't know enough to be a patch on a naval officer's pants. It would be back to the ranks for him, as soon as the

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Department released the order, back to his chief quartermaster's cap and brass-buttoned coat of blue serge.

And so Smokum sawed wood and bided the time. Meanwhile he gave Seasick a wide berth. When he saw Seasick heading his way, Smokum moved. When it was necessary to speak to Seasick in line of duty, as it frequently was, Seasick being junior navigating officer—which doesn't mean that he was a navigator—Smokum always tucked his hat beneath his jumper before approaching him; thus he circumvented the salute, for men uncovered are not required to salute officers. But to get around the "sir" was not so easy. He couldn't answer a direct question from an officer with plain yes or no. An enlisted man must always append the "sir."

And Seasick took a fiendish delight in asking Smokum questions. No less than a dozen times a day would he summon Smokum, for no other apparent purpose than to ask him a few foolish questions, to extract a few "Yes, sirs" and "No, sirs" from him.

This hurt.

"But just wait," Smokum said to Stretch one day. "Wait till we run into some heavy weather. If I don't make that bird knock off his monkey work, I'm cockeyed!"

"Heavy weather?" Stretch blinked his bleak blue eyes in perplexity. "What're y'aimin' t'do?"

"Never mind," Smokum grinned. "You watch. All I want to see is a good heavy blow, a gale, a typhoon ——"

A FEW WEEKS passed. The *Rapaho* ran up to Nagasaki, Japan; then over to Shanghai. Then one day Smokum had his wish.

One late afternoon coming from Shanghai down to Manila, the *Rapaho* ran into the outer verge of one of those terrific typhoons that frequently sweep that part of the world. The barometer fell, and greasy looking clouds with ragged edges raced across the wild sky, giving unmistakable announcement of a fast-approaching hurricane, the direction of which the veering wind indicated to be to the northward. When night came on she was well into it and making heavy weather of it, both rolling and pitching, for she had the onslaught of the blow on her port bow.

At midnight she was cork screwing to the tune of forty-five degrees roll and so heavy a pitch that it was necessary to have the man at the throttle shut off, stop the engine with each rise of her stern end, so that the propeller wouldn't race as it rose clear of the water and cause serious damage to the engine or shaft. And through the mid-watch it grew worse and worse. The wind whined and snarled, steam hissed, life-boats' falls and tackle creaked and groaned under the heavy tossing, while buckets, ditty-boxes, everything loose went rumbling and tumbling across the decks.

Nearing four o'clock that morning an officer left his stateroom and staggered up to the bridge deck. Then on hands and knees he crawled aft through the blackness along the lee side, far aft to the break of the bridge deck, that is, where the bridge deck rose from the after well deck, to a point between the rail and a cradled lifeboat. There, gripping the rail, Mr. Boswell pulled himself up to his feet.

He clung hard, striving to penetrate the intense black about him. There was nothing to see. The roar and rumble and splash was deafening—the moan of the wind aloft, the hiss of steam, the thunderous impacts of bow and stern and the roar of hundreds of tons of water rushing across the well decks. And how she rolled! How the lifeboat behind him groaned and strained to tear itself loose from the grips that held it. He felt her heart throbs, the *thump-thump-thump* of her engine through his bare feet, and his hands gripping the rail trembled with the quiver and vibration of her.

Mr. Boswell was very, very sick.

MORNING came with a gray-black sky and the furies still howling, the sea a wild confusion of racing and rolling and tumbling mountains and the *Rapaho* tossing like a chip.

Her gobs took breakfast on the fly that morning, for no tables could be lowered in such weather. Most of them ate no breakfast. Many went farther than that—surrendered last night's supper.

Mr. Boswell must have surrendered several nights' suppers. Clad in his white pajamas he was still clinging to the rail up there in the starboard after corner of the bridge deck, shouting "Ee-yoo-rup" down at the water.

Mr. Boswell must have spotted that secluded corner beforehand. Nor could he

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have spotted a better spot. With a ventilator forward of him he couldn't be seen from the bridge, while the long lifeboat at his back shut him off from the eyes of any who might be inboard on the bridge deck. He could be seen only from aft, from down on the well deck, or from back on the poop. And there were no idlers or day-dreamers on either of those decks that morning, for the reason that neither of those decks was any place to idle or day-dream. The poop was high up and exposed to the full blast of the elements, and the well deck was flooded with three feet of water, which rushed forward and aft with each rise and fall of the ship's bow, so that men going between poop and bridge deck had to swim for it.

The sky brightened as the forenoon wore away, but there was no let-up in the snarl and roar of wind and wave. Then, nearing noon, quite abruptly the ship ceased rolling. She still pitched, but not so heavily. Moreover it came to Mr. Boswell in those few moments that he no longer felt the pulse of her engine in his bare feet, nor the tremble of her in his hands clutching the rail. From which he correctly concluded that she was stopped, hove to; that the skipper had decided to ride it out.

This would ease the situation. But Mr. Boswell was too nauseously and giddily sick to be glad about anything. At that moment the sudden inheritance of a million dollars, along with the death of Smokum Buckner wouldn't have even made him smile. He was as weak and empty of stomach as weak and empty could be. He was by no means positive, in fact, that his stomach was right side in. And his eyes were commencing to play all sorts of dizzy tricks on him: The hoisting whips and winches appeared to be whirling and capering about him, as objects whirl and caper when seen from a merry-go-round. It was terrible. As well be standing on the dizzy edge of nothing.

And then, in the whirling maze of objects back aft, Mr. Boswell saw something that caused him to drop quickly down on deck and crouch in close under the keel of the life boat. It was the face of Smokum Buckner, back aft in the doorway of the poop. Of all persons, he didn't want Smokum to see him now. Smokum would have the whole ship's company out laughing at him! So he crouched low under the boat and watched.

With his moving-picture camera slung over his shoulder, Smokum stood back there in the doorway of the poop, apparently debating his chances on getting forward to the bridge deck across the flooded well-deck. So Mr. Boswell thought. He thought wrong. As the ship's stern end rose and the three feet of water rushed forward over the well deck, Smokum stepped out quickly, slammed the door behind him, then jumped inboard to the ladder leading up on to the poop and scrambled up it.

The poop was the driest place on the upper decks, and, high up it was, an ideal spot from which to churn off a reel or two of genuine sea movies.

Crouching under the lifeboat Seasick watched him as a rabbit watches a hound. He had no idea what was behind Smokum's black eyes. But he did wish in the worst way that Smokum would turn and face astern or to port for a few minutes, for he wanted in the most uncontrollable way to say "Europe" some more.

Seasick realized that wish. After standing there holding to a ventilator for a few minutes, Smokum turned and staggered back to the taffrail, over which he leaned and gazed at the wild, wallowing waste of white and gray. Up shot Seasick from under the lifeboat and out to the rail,

For several minutes he held violent and convulsive conversation with old boy Neptune, although by now his belly must have been flat against his spine. Presently he turned aft a face that was hideous in its ghastliness.

It was impossible for Mr. Boswell to turn any whiter, or for his bulging eyes to bulge any more without leaving their sockets. But if he had a shotgun in that moment he would have blown Smokum Buckner and his moving-picture machine straight to wheresoever Smokum Buckner was predestined to go.

Grinning from ear to ear, Smokum stood up there on the poop, grinding away, slowly turning the crank of his kinetograph —and pointing it straight at Boswell.

So that was the game. Sick as he was Seasick saw it. Smokum wasn't out after a picture of the crazy ocean at all. He wasn't training his camera down upon the water, but straight forward along the ship's side, on a level. The insolent puppy! Taking a picture of him, Ensign Boswell, up here jackknifed over the rail in his white

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pajamas, in sharp silhouette against the gray sky! What for? Why, it was as plain as the quivering point of his nose to Seasick. Smokum wanted that picture to hold over his head, like the proverbial sword. The scum!

Mr. Boswell raised a weak fist. Then he turned, doubled over the rail and went on regurgitating.

And Smokum continued turning the crank of his motion-picture camera.

"Now, you son of a sea-hawk," he grunted into the wind, "you'll quit calling me down to your room and making me say 'sir,' or by George, I'll exhibit this picture on every ship in the Asiatic Fleet!"

THROUGHOUT that day and night the wild orgy continued. But the *Rapaho* was a well-found ship and the worst she suffered was a good shaking up. The following afternoon she stood in to Manila Bay and anchored.

In his battle-ship days Seasick's shipmates used to say, "Up anchor, down Boswell," and vice versa. So it still was—down anchor, up Mr. Boswell. Shortly after anchoring that afternoon he was up and about decks, perky and cocky as ever, and scouting Smokum. He entered the chart house, where he found Stretch and Shrimp.

"Go get Buckner," he snapped at Shrimp. "And make it snappy!"

"He's in the cabin with the captain now, sir," said Shrimp. "Captain sent him word a few minutes ago that he wanted to see him."

"Did, eh? What for?"

Before Shrimp could make reply Smokum entered. From the look of him something extraordinary had happened. He was warm and wild-eyed.

"Say guys," he blurted out "a thousand guesses, and I'll lay a hundred dollars to a dime you can't guess the dope the old man just handed me ——"

He stopped, as his eyes lighted on Seasick.

Mr. Boswell's nose was wiggling with curiosity. He waited. But Smokum remained silent. Stretch spoke up.

"Ensign Boswell is aimin' to see you, I reckon."

For which Stretch received a quick look of resentment from Mr. Boswell. For Boswell was craving to know that dope between Smokum and the captain.

"Uh-huh." Smokum faced Seasick. "Want to see me?"

"—see me, *sir!*" corrected Mr. Boswell. "Yes. I want that reel of film."

"What reel—*sir?*"

The point of Mr. Boswell's nose twitched upward.

"You understand me!"

Smokum pushed back his hat. A look of sage stupidity came over his dark face.

"I don't think I do—*sir*," he answered. "I've churned off, *sir*, several reels, *sir*, since I'm on this ship, *sir*. *Sir*, which one do you mean, *sir*?"

Mr. Boswell's long face went white and his eyes blazed like indignant blue diamonds.

"—— you, Buckner, don't think you can make a monkey of me! You can't get away with it! It wouldn't take much for me to run you over the road! And you know it! My word will carry a lot more weight than yours at a court martial!"

"Oh, is that so—*sir?*" Smokum grinned, and then boosted himself up on to the chart desk.

"Stand on your feet! You're talking to an officer! Take that grin off your face!"

Smokum laughed at him. Mr. Boswell was speechless. This wasn't like the Smokum Buckner of old, of ante-bellum days, who would flare up and fight at the drop of a hat or over a pair of holey black socks.

"Say—" Smokum leaned forward his elbow on his knee, chin in his hand—"who the —— do you think you are?"

Just what Seasick wanted. He turned a face that beamed with delight upon Stretch and Shrimp.

"Did you men hear that?"

Their eyes on the deck, neither answered.

"I say, *did you men hear that!*" Seasick bawled.

"Certainly they heard you, you —— fool!" Smokum cut loose. "You don't see any cotton in their ears, do you?"

Smokum dropped down off the chart desk. He was a swarthy red now, and in his dark eyes was that fiery something Seasick had seen there once long before. Mr. Boswell backed away toward the door, for he wanted no part of this Smokum. Smokum followed him up.

"You want that reel of film, eh? Well, let's see you get it. I'll take that reel over to Manila tomorrow and have it developed."

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Although Seasick's shaking knees showed that he was a scared Mr. Boswell, yet there was a gleam of triumph in his blue eyes. He backed away till he was outside the door. Then:

"No, you won't," he cackled. "You won't take anything ashore, not even yourself. Next time you go over this ship's gangway you'll be handcuffed to a master-at-arms!"

Smokum stood in the middle of the room glaring out at him.

"Is that so?"

"You men heard," Seasick flung back to Stretch and Shrimp. "You heard him using disrespectful and insulting language to me. You'll be called as witnesses ——"

"Go ahead, you swelled up she-jackass!" Smokum broke in on him. "Go on down to the executive's yeoman and bray your head off! Go ahead, you —— fourflusher, and run me up—before I cut loose and give you something to run me up for!"

Seasick went.

"ROMPIN' rip-tails, Smokum!" Shrimp broke out, "ain't you got better sense than that! Man, they can hand you a couple of years in Eighty-four* for that stunt!"

"More 'n that, I reckon," Stretch put in. "That feller is gonna be aimin' to hang you now."

"Oh, your grandmother's eye-glasses," Smokum growled, and again boosted himself up onto the chart desk.

He sat there glowering at them for a moment. Then he broke out in a laugh.

"But the joker is, gentlemen sailors," he broke the news, "they won't do any such —— thing, because I'm just as much an officer as Mr. Boswell is—more of an officer. The way I figure, Boswell drops back to the ranks before many weeks, while my appointment is permanent. Ensign Buckner—how does that sound, anyway?"

By their blinking eyes they thought he was crazy.

"It's straight stuff," Smokum added. "The Department appointed me a full-fledged ensign a month ago. The dope just came. That was what the captain wanted to see me about. I could've told Boswell that, but I wanted to have some fun with him. But you'd never guess why the Department made me. The funniest thing a man ever heard of! I got it on *direct disobedience of orders!*"

In the executive office Ensign Boswell received this same disconcerting enlightenment. The executive officer sat at his desk, going over mail, his yeoman at another, when Seasick entered.

"I want to put Quartermaster Buckner on report," Seasick said to the yeoman.

The executive officer swung round in his swivel chair.

"Buckner on report? What for?"

"Disrespect, sir; abusive, obscene and insulting language to an officer," Boswell answered.

The executive grinned.

"Better tie a can on it, Boswell," he advised. "Buckner has been ensign for a month. His appointment just came in this mail."

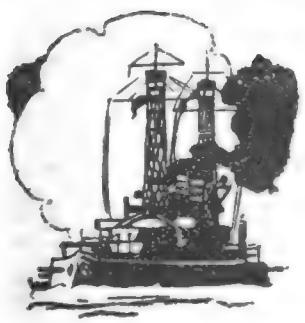
It took Mr. Boswell a few seconds to digest that.

"Also he's recommended for a medal for distinguished service," the executive added, and returned to his mail.

"Buckner?" Mr. Boswell was slightly dazed. "I don't understand, sir! Distinguished service!"

"Oh—" the executive swung round impatiently— "he had the wheel on the *Bentham* one day, I understand, and spun her about in time to miss a torpedo. Say, get out of here, *please*, Boswell! I'm busy!"

*Eighty-four—A naval prison at Mare Island, Calif.



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The BLACK SUIT

by Leslie McFarlane

Author of "An Imposter," "The River Trail."

"SIWASH SAM" SLOANE might have had a fortune in his own right, and might have worn his check suit with the yellow stripes after all, if it had not been for his habit of verifying the labels on the shining, shimmering bottles in the saloons of Thirty Mile. He came up to the Porcupine in the first rush, having reached Cobalt too late to obtain more than the crumbs from the rich men's tables there, and promptly succumbed to the heavenly fascination of great quantities of liquor too easily obtained at the expense of others.

Hence it was that he became merely a hanger-on, one of those denizens of Thirty Mile who lived and drank on the bounty of those sturdier men who went out into the muskegs and bad lands of the Porcupine, and underwent incredible hardships to make a stake once in a while, and live riotously and generously on the proceeds. Like many of these hangers-on, he was not above picking the pockets of a drunken companion, nor did he have compunctions regarding the use of certain little card tricks which might bring applause if done from the stage and death if detected at a green table.

A man can not live thus for all time. There came a day when Siwash Sam Sloane found that free drinks were not as frequent as they had been, that fewer moneyed friends were available for poker games and that his ready flattery was failing to find the mark in securing loans. When this day came, he decided, much against his will, to go up into the rocky wastes above Thirty Mile and stake a few claims. If worthless, they could usually be sold to an unwary newcomer; if valuable, so much the better.

So he disappeared from Thirty Mile and, within a week, was forgotten. His return, in a month's time, was dramatic, for he brought back with him samples of a richness seldom seen in Thirty Mile, and told a story of a strike in the Papoose Lake area that sent eager men out on the trails in the dead of night, and brought more eager men into Thirty Mile by the next stage. And when prospectors began to dribble back from Papoose Lake to record their claims, and reported that without doubt it was a big find, and that Siwash Sam's claims were the pick of the lot, Siwash Sam Sloane became a popular hero. Thirty Mile began to boom.

From Montreal came a fat man who wore spats and a bowler hat—to the great edification of Thirty Mile—and he offered Mr. Sloane an even $50,000 for his claims on Papoose. Siwash Sam, overcome almost as much by being called "Mister," as by the mere mention of $50,000, stuttered his acceptance. The man from Montreal said he would close the deal in the morning, after he had visited the recording office to see that everything was regular. Siwash Sam took $100 on account, bought a case of good whisky from the Irishman down at

"The Black Suit," copyright, 1925, by Leslie McFarlane.

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Little Nugget Saloon, wherewith to celebrate, then went over to Jepson's to buy a new suit that would indelibly mark him as a man of wealth and great importance in Thirty Mile.

Jepson was a slight, neat little Englishman with sparse gray hair, and a goatee. He was a mild-mannered fellow and, although he made a living ostensibly by selling boots, shoes and clothing of all kinds to the men of the camp, it was common knowledge that he had accumulated a small fortune in a very short time, by grubstaking penniless prospectors in whom he had confidence and who justified that trust. His store was merely a frame shack, and it had a sign above the door on which was inscribed

A. JEPSON, CLOTHING

Real Service is Our Motto.

Mr Jepson came forward without interest when Siwash Sam Sloane entered his store. He did not like Siwash. Perhaps it was his prejudice against the trace of Indian blood which ran in Sloane's veins, the same being responsible for his nickname; perhaps it was just that he didn't like Sam's looks or his general air of blustering importance or his manner of swaggering into the shop. Jepson waited, faintly smiling.

"I wanna buy the bes' suit in the store," announced Sam, in a loud voice. "Gimme the bes' suit you got."

He was fairly drunk, but Mr. Jepson was used to that, so he merely nodded.

"How high, now, would you care to go?"

"Ne' mind the cost," roared Sam. "I'll pay for it. I got the money right here."

He dug out a handful of bills, remaining from the original hundred, and held them under Mr. Jepson's nose. Mr. Jepson did not like that.

"Gimme the bes' suit in the place. This time tomorry I'll have more money than anybody else in *this* town! Gimme a suit that'll make people know I'm comin'. Gimme one of them striped, checkered, red, yeller and green suits with big dots on it, that'll knock their eyes out. Somepin' swell, see?"

"A nice gray, now?" suggested Jepson mildly.

"Gray, nothin'!" vetoed Siwash Sam, with profane emphasis. "Somepin' with color in it. Somepin' gay. Here, lemme see that one."

"THAT one," was a most offensive check suit, hanging upon the rack near-by. It came from a ready-made house, of low ideals and quick profits; its cut was the most extreme of a past season; its material was so shoddy that every time Mr. Jepson looked at the suit he was ashamed of himself for offering it for sale. The pattern was gorgeous. A violent black-and-white check mingled obtrusively with a shrieking stripe, in which various colors of the spectrum made war upon each other, with yellow triumphant.

Jepson had always felt conscious of a slight headache on looking at that suit. Such raiment, he felt, was a criminal offence. He had kept it in stock merely in case some spendthrift Indian should wander in some day in search of purple and fine linen, in which event that flagrant, terrible suit would be assured of a ready sale. But Mr. Jepson's simple faith in humanity had always included a settled conviction that no white man would even want to be found dead in that alarming suit.

Siwash Sam, however, wanted it. He admired it. Jepson did not have the heart to sell it to him. The suit, he privately considered, was really too much like a drunken tailor's conception of a steam calliope.

"A bit loud, don't you think?" he suggested. "I have a nice gray, now——"

"I like 'em loud," declared Siwash Sam. "When I buys a suit I wants people to know I've bought a suit. I wants 'em to see me comin'. I'll take *that* there suit. I don't want none of your grays. That's the suit for me, that there ring-tailed zebra suit. How much?"

He tried on the coat and looked proudly at himself in the mirror. It was even worse than Mr. Jepson had anticipated. The suit, without doubt, was an atrocity. But Siwash Sam beamed. The suit pleased him, and he would have no other.

"It's not the most expensive suit in the store," said Mr. Jepson. "It's only forty dollars."

At that, he had tacked on an extra fifteen, but when he mentioned the fact that it was not the most expensive suit, a look of pain crossed the countenance of his customer. He not only wanted the most conspicuous suit in town, but the costliest as well. Was he not able to afford the best of everything

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now? Was he not closing the deal for the claims in the morning?

"Well," he said dubiously, "I'll take it anyway."

"The sleeves should be shortened a trifle," said Mr. Jepson, busy with the tape. "I'll have the alterations made for you. Shall I send it over?"

"Yes. Send it over to the hotel. Tonight, see! Have it there tonight or I won't take it." Siwash Sam donned his old coat again and fished out a bottle of Scotch from his pocket. "Have a drink. No? All right, then. It's your loss. I'll have one myself." He gulped, copiously. "I'm sellin my claims in the mornin'. Did y'hear about 'em. Fifty thousand dollars! It's my night to howl. Have that suit there at the hotel tonight."

He swaggered over to the door.

"Fifty thousand," he roared, his lean, ugly face, with beetling brows and stubble of reddish beard, triumphant and contemptuous as he looked back at Mr. Jepson.

He banged the door and went out, down the middle of the road. He always took the middle of the road now.

Mr. Jepson sighed.

"Blood will tell," he murmured, to himself, and took down that awful suit from the rack.

In a way, he was pleased that it had been sold, for it always pained him to look at it. But then—the advertisement! Siwash Sam Sloane would tell people far and wide that he had bought the suit at Jepson's, doubtless claiming he had paid anywhere from seventy-five to a hundred dollars for it, and that it was the best suit Jepson had in the store. He knew Siwash Sam. Mr. Jepson shook his head sadly.

It was characteristic of Siwash Sam, as he went back to the Golden City Hotel, that there were no disquieting thoughts in his mind. The circumstances surrounding the acquisition of those valuable claims on Papoose Lake twitched not at his conscience. Had the people of Thirty Mile known that Little Pete McGill, whom no one had seen for six weeks past, by the way, staked those claims a week before Siwash Sam arrived on the scene they might not have acclaimed Sam as a popular hero. Had they known, in addition, that Sam had shot Little Pete McGill on the shores of Papoose Lake, while stealing McGill's canoe, and had left McGill there for dead, later jumping his claims and recording them at Thirty Mile as his own, their attitude toward Siwash Sam Sloane might have been less cordial. But they did not know these things. There had been no trace of Little Pete McGill, there had been nothing to indicate anything untoward, and all was well with Sloane. He would get the money in the morning.

He reflected with satisfaction that he would now be able to wear check suits and smoke expensive cigars and buy all the liquor he wanted and horn in on the biggest poker games. No longer was he a hanger-on about the gold camp. He was a personage, a man who had made his stake. He could talk to the best of 'em now, and make 'em listen. He was Siwash Sam Sloane, first staker in the Papoose, and everybody was talking about him.

HE WENT up to his room in the hotel and partook heavily of more whisky, then tumbled across the bed and fell asleep. It was dark when he was awakened by the hotel clerk.

"Parcel for you, Sam," said the clerk, lighting the lamp. "Old Jepson sent it over."

Siwash Sam rose wearily, his head aching and his throat dry. He took a drink, then gave one to the clerk. Bidding the clerk remain and state his opinion on the niftiest suit ever seen in Thirty Mile, he ripped the strings off the parcel, tore away the paper, opened the box and lifted out the suit, neatly folded.

Siwash Sam stared. The clerk hastily applauded.

"Yes, sir. That's some suit," he said, admiringly, before Sam had even unfolded it from the hanger. "That's some nifty little suit. It's worth a drink."

He reached for the bottle.

Siwash Sam choked. He gurgled, insanely. Then he burst into wild and hideous profanity.

"Look at it!" he howled, brandishing the suit above his head. "Look at it!"

"What's the matter with it?"

"Black!" yelped Sam. "Look at it! Black! A measly, black suit! Not the one I bought at all. I bought a snappy, nifty check suit. Black and white, with yaller stripes. A suit you could see a mile away in a black cellar, and look what he sent me—a black one! A black suit!"

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And, truly, the suit was of a somber darkness, a plain, black suit, such as would be worn by a clergyman or an undertaker on week days. It was a modest suit, a retiring suit. Its cut was conservative, as befits a black suit. It was quiet, unobtrusive, black.

Siwash Sam raved. He picked up the black suit and hurled it to the floor. He took a drink. He cursed the suit. He took another drink. He cursed Jepson. He cursed all Jepson's relatives and ancestors. He took another drink, a big one. He cursed everybody in Thirty Mile. He cursed the clerk for his lack of sympathy and then, working up to a magnificent climax, he cursed himself for ever dealing with Old Man Jepson.

"Send it back," bawled Siwash. "Send it back and make him bring me my check suit. I wouldn't wear a black suit like that if I was in my coffin, I wouldn't."

"Have to wait till morning," said the clerk. "His store's closed now."

Siwash Sam kicked the black suit out of his way while he indulged in a general sort of cursing for a few minutes, vowed to bring the suit back to Jepson first thing in the morning and make Jepson eat it for breakfast, took a big drink, gave the clerk a big drink, took a bigger drink, then stamped unsteadily out of his room and down the stairs.

The "rotunda" of the Golden City Hotel, was just a big, bare room, with a desk, a box stove, and half a dozen chairs. There was the usual assemblage of loungers, nondescript men in worn khaki or corduroys, men of steady eyes and lean faces, and they looked up as Siwash Sam Sloane came magnificently down the stairs, exhaling a great fragrance of liquor, and muttering curses.

"Black suit!" he was grunting to himself. "Black suit! Sendin' me a measly, black suit!"

There was a little man standing before the stove. He was a shrewd little man, with deep-set eyes, and a mild, humorous mouth. His face was pale, he had evidently failed to shave in weeks, he looked weary, and he was just in "from outside," for his high boots were caked with mud and his rough clothes were travel stained. His hands were clasped meditatively behind his back, he had a cigar cocked at a belligerent angle in one corner of his mouth, and when he saw Siwash Sam Sloane thumping down the stairs, he carefully removed the cigar and cast it aside.

"All right, Sam," he called gently.

Siwash Sam Sloane had not noticed him until then, but when he heard the voice he straightened up, drunkenly, and when he saw the little man he gazed at him dully for a moment, then started, perceptibly. As if coming out of a stupor, he reached swiftly and mechanically for his hip.

Siwash Sam, as has been indicated, was not sober. His movement was quick but it was not as quick as the movement of the little man. His hand found the revolver, but he fumbled for a second, and in that second, the little man had drawn, aimed and fired.

The buzz of conversation in the rotunda was suddenly stilled. The loungers dove frantically for cover, but there was no need of that now. Siwash Sam tumbled down the four remaining steps to the bottom of the stairs, and lay quite still, while the little man calmly put back his revolver and turned to those around.

"You saw it," he said mildly enough. "He tried to draw on me. He knew what I come after. You boys all know me—I'm Pete McGill and I staked them claims on Papoose a week before Sloane, here, came on 'em. He shot me in the leg, stole my canoe, and if it hadn't been for an Injun that took care of me till I got better, I wouldn't be here now. Sloane jumped my claims, but if there's any justice in this camp I'll prove my right to 'em. He got what was comin' to him."

So saying, he walked over to the door and went away.

LITTLE PETE McGILL found that there was justice in Thirty Mile. He proved his right to the claims and he got the fifty thousand dollars from the man from Montreal who wore spats and a bowler hat. This money he divided, as per agreement, with Old Jepson, the clothing dealer, who had grubstaked him for the trip to Papoose.

As for Siwash Sam Sloane, the coroner's jury brought in a verdict of "death from natural causes," and it was generally felt that this summed up the situation to a nicety. He was buried as promptly as possible and was soon forgotten.

The undertaker often remarked on the coincidence that Siwash Sam should have ordered a black suit the very day he died.

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It was nice, he thought, that Siwash had a black suit in which to be buried.

"So many of 'em hasn't," he philosophized. "So many of 'em gets buried in any old kind of clothes and it never seems quite regular to me. But that black suit was just the thing. A real funeral outfit. You'd think he ordered it special."

The hotel clerk always affirmed that Old Jepson was in league with Satan.

"Can yuh figger it?" he often said, in recounting the incident. "Siwash orders a check suit and Jepson sends him a black one. He knew what Siwash needed better than Siwash himself. He's one of them there witches, that's what he is."

Old Jepson often chuckled grimly to himself when he considered that, in the affair of Siwash Sam Sloane, he had indeed upheld the reputation of the store for "Real Service." Had not Little Pete McGill dropped in at the store on his arrival in town that evening, to explain how Siwash had jumped their claims, before going over to the hotel and "have a little talk with him," as Little Pete expressed it, he would have gone ahead and delivered that offensive check suit with the yellow stripes. And no man, reflected Jepson, not even Siwash Sam Sloane, would want to be even seen dead in such a suit. A neat, conservative black is, after all, the only thing for a funeral.

SIEUR FREDERICK PHILIPSE—SPECULATOR

by Arthur Woodward

WAMPUM, or Indian shell money, was extensively used by the early English, Dutch and French colonists, not only in their dealings with the Indians but also as a medium of exchange among themselves.

Among the Dutch who first settled in Manhattan and the vicinity, the Algonquian term, *sewant*, also spelled, *sewan*, *seward* and *seewand*, and meaning, scattered or loose (beads), was applied to the wampum. The shell money in general was made of many different species of shells, but that used along the Atlantic seaboard, especially in New England and around New York, was fashioned from purple and white portions of the round or hard shell clam. According to the "Hand Book of the American Indian," Long Island was called by the Dutch, "sewan hacky" or "wampum land" as there was an abundance of shells suitable for the manufacture of wampum found on the shores of that place.

Values in the shell money fluctuated after the arrival of the Dutch and English and fortunes were made by farsighted settlers who invested heavily in the strange medium of exchange.

Foremost among the speculators who were bent on cornering the *sewant* market was Frederick Philipse, architect and carpenter of the Dutch West India Company.

He bought extensively of the loose shell beads from the Indian manufacturers and, as there was a Council ordinance against counterfeiting wampum, *i.e.* making it from shells of inferior quality, bone, horn, glass, wood and stone, and as strung *sewant* brought a higher price than the loose beads, Philipse hired some of the good Dutch vraus to string his fortune on stout cords.

The amount he had on hand may be estimated by the statement made by Reverend Charles Wooley, of England who visited New York in 1678. Remarking on the success of Philipse he referred to the latter as, "One Frederick Philips, the richest Miin Heer in that place (meaning New York) who is said to have whole hogsheads of Indian money or wampu m."

So completely did the speculators of the commodity corner the market that, after the English conquest, the rate of exchange, which had fallen under the Dutch régime, immediately jumped to four hundred per cent. of its former value.

Sieur Philipse, who had foreseen the rise in price, immediately turned his hogsheads of shell beads into cold cash and real estate. His success may best be shown by the fact that in November, 1676, his estate was assessed at thirteen hundred pounds or sixty-five thousand dollars under the English rule.

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Days of FORTY-NINE

A SIX-PART STORY
PART II

"—the days of old,
The days of gold,
The days of '49"

by Gordon Young

Author of "LaRue of the 88," "Pearl-Hunger," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

INTO the town of San Francisco one July noon in the year 1849 rode Dick Hales, ex-Texas Ranger.

"Where can I find Hubert Lee?" was the question he put to the miners and hawkers in the street.

But Lee was out of town.

As Hales sat on his horse looking about at the people and the town, gold mad, drunken, lecherous, shoddy, he heard cries of—"Out of the way, we're Hounds. Hounds are coming," and a party of horsemen led by the infamous and beautiful Dona Elvira Eton rode up to him.

One, Jerry Fletcher, thinking him a Spaniard from his sombrero lifted his whip, crying——

"Out of the way, greaser."

Hales dragged him from his horse and stood over him, menacing.

"Let that man go, señor," said Elvira.

"Take your carrion," said Hales, "where can I find Hubert Lee."

Dona Elvira did not know. Hubert Lee was to her but a name, although she knew his arch enemy, the blustering and prominent Col. Nevinson, very well.

She asked Hales his name.

"Hales?" she said, "I have heard that name before."

Noticing a sudden flicker of interest in Hales' eye she tried to pump him as to whom he sought in reality, but he, finding that she had no information useful to him, deserted her for the horse market.

There he sold his horse for two hundred dollars and repaired to the Magnolia, a saloon and gambling den run by Monsieur Max. There day and night, apparently never sleeping, sat Stewart Dawes, the gambler.

Hales walked up to him.

"Deal," he said.

He won three times his two hundred and left with a promise to return.

AT THAT moment a ship was docking at the wharf. It was from the Atlantic, and, although it would soon be deserted to the scavengers to convert into rooming-house, saloon, or brothel, its arrival was an event, for it brought the great new mirror that was to adorn the Magnolia, and Mr. Tesla, a gentleman representative of a gambling syndicate, who intended to buy the place from M. Max. With Tesla came his daughter Ilona, and Kredra her Basque serving maid, who considered herself a seeress. On this ship also came John Taylor a young lawyer, and Martin O'Day a little cockney in search of gold.

Taylor disappeared into the crowd, and soon, by luck, got into conversation with Judge Deering, a champion of law and order in a city of bandits. The judge took him as his business partner.

The little cockney went to the Magnolia where he was immediately treated to the sight of Stewart Dawes shooting a card sharper. Soon he found himself talking to Hubert Lee who had just arrived from the mines. Lee told him that before he could be a miner he needed five hundred dollars' worth of outfit, and a partner.

Just then Lee was whisked off by a friend who told him that Col. Nevinson was trying to outdo him in a business deal, and O'Day bumped into a large, good-natured drunken miner. After some talk these two agreed to become partners and went off to the room of Bill Burton, the miner. But Burton had no money and O'Day was at a loss to know where it was coming from. That night he stole out of the room, filled a bag with street dust and washers and went back to the Magnolia.

As he entered there was a report and a flash. When the crowd separated Hubert Lee lay dead on the floor and Nevinson stood over him with a smoking revolver. Beside him stood the cadaverous Bruce Brace, a member of the cowardly society of Hounds and his constant bodyguard.

O'Day walked up to the table of Dawes. There Dawes was arguing with a young Spaniard, José de Sola.

"Change your bet," said Dawes.

"Days of '49," copyright, 1925, by Gordon Young.

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"Señor, I weel not," said José, and Dawes found himself looking into the barrel of a gun. He dealt to the Spaniard and the little cockney, who had crept up and laid his bag on the tray. O'Day won and crept back to his room.

IN THE meantime Nevinson was at the house of Dona Elvira, telling her about his fight with Lee. But she was not interested. This strange iron-faced stranger, Hales, interested her and she wished to find out who it was that Lee knew and Hales wanted. If she could find out she would enlist Ferdinand, a homeless singing vagabond, whose life she had once saved, and who was, therefore, her devoted slave, to draw Hales into an entanglement with her.

She discovered that there was an Anna Hales who had followed the colonel to California. What relation to Hales she was the colonel did not know, but this woman had fallen so low that she now lived in the infested slum, drinking and debauching herself in every way.

Elvira smiled and held her peace.

When the colonel had gone—

"Put me to bed early, Tota," she said to her maid. "I must be fresh tomorrow, for I have many things to do."

BURTON and O'Day were just coming from breakfast with their new wealth when they heard a baby crying. They entered the house from which the sound came. There lay a preacher, his wife and baby all sick and starving.

"How much better to get wisdom than gold," moaned the preacher.

"Ma'am," said Burton to the wife, "here's some money; an we'll get some folks up here ta help ya pretty soon."

He ducked backward and out, and hurried off toward the center of the town, the Plaza.

EVEN at that early hour the city was not only astir, but bustling. Men yet touseled from their beds, hurried about, hastily buying, selling, changing their fortunes by thousands of dollars before breakfast. Men who had not been in bed at all walked along aimlessly, usually a little drunkenly, with money gone, strength gone hope gone. Scores and scores, hundreds of miners, overheated by the hot sun and feverish work, chilled by the icy water and frosty nights of the mountains, sickened by rough food and rougher liquor, had crept back down from the diggings. There were many suicides every day, as if the crushed weaklings took themselves out of the way to make room for more boisterous and daring men.

On the dry barren square of the Plaza wagons were scattered, and to the wagons were tied mules and oxen, that fed and stamped about in the dust. The Plaza was already swarming with men, with groups talking excitedly of real estate, diggings, of the shortage in flour, the rise in pork, the fall in lumber, of Hubert Lee's death—some said 'murder,' others, 'duel.' Men discussed freighting, the heavy play at this or that gambling table, the sale of the Magnolia, the unnamed man who for an hour had 'bought' Washington Hall the night before. They discussed the two full columns in that morning's *Alta California* (published three times a week), giving an account of robberies and assaults, and men wondered what was going to be done about criminals. There were no police and nobody had the willingness to serve as policemen.

Venders, with hardly more than a plank and two boxes, and sometimes not that, displayed and called their wares: Jimcrack jewelry, jimcrack medicine of which sick miners gulped incredible amounts, peanuts, popcorn.

Many small boys and some men scrambled in the sweepings before the gambling houses and saloon doorways, blowing dust from their palms and, with moistened fingers or heads of pins, picked out the flakes of dust, gold dust, carelessly swept from halls and barrooms.

Burton was used to mining camps where if a man had anything to say he went into the center of the camp, lifted up his voice and said it, and men gathered about and listened. If they disapproved, they said so. If they approved, they acted, instantly.

Now he went to the corral around the flag pole, climbed up, balancing himself astride the topmost rail, and shouted—

"Hey-Oh! Here, all you fellows. I got something to tell you!"

Faces turned toward him doubtfully, then, with a kind of wariness, men moved nearer. Hank, the horsebuyer, searched about for a stick to whittle and took out his knife. Venders edged in. Groups broke up and turned toward him.

"Fellows! There's a parson, his wife an' a baby—a little bit of a feller—up there on the hill, sick. They come with some people that lit out for the mines and left 'em—sick. He's a powerful fine preacher. They need a doctor. They need grub. They need some place to live. He's a powerful good preacher, an' she's a mighty fine woman. Fellows, she's *our* kind of a woman, with a real baby——"

That was as far as he got or needed to get.

"Where? Where are they?"

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Generosity was instantaneous. Two or three men snatched off their hats, deposited their own contributions, and were surrounded by others, anxious to give. Word flew about this way and that. In their charity as in their dissipation there was an eager turbulence. Their impulses were simple, without restraint or moderation.

A half-drunken man struggled up over the end gate of a wagon, stood up, yelled for listeners and made a speech of his own. He was for giving the preacher a job and hiring a church. Some sober men nodded in approval. No one asked to what creed the preacher belonged. There were many preachers in the city, and some of them worked as laborers, as dishwashers; but on behalf of this one, Burton had struck the hearts of men.

A doctor was sent for. A delegation was selected to call on the family. Burton was not in it. He had explained where the shanty was. That was enough. He and Martin went to breakfast.

IX

A TENT known as the Nugget Restaurant was popular. Just why, no one might have been able to say, but it was popular with the miners, who ate in noisy haste.

It was filled with men, mostly miners. There was the scrape of heavy boots, clattering of tin and iron dishes, buzz and jargon of fragmentary voices, a noisy chewing, and sucking at coffee cups. They were a rough, healthy lot, breakfasting on steaks, flapjacks, coffee, thick slices of bread, hard-boiled eggs. Eggs, hard-boiled, were a dollar each. The tables were bare boards. There were rough benches, stools, boxes to sit upon. The floor was earth, pounded hard as concrete by the endless tramping. In the afternoons, when the wind came up flinging dust and sand, dishes and tables were covered with dust.

Burton squeezed in on a bench, Martin wriggled in beside him.

"Three hen-nuggets, hard, coffee an' a hunk o' bear meat!" said Burton to a middle-aged, slightly flustered, but gentlemanly waiter.

"Same f'r me!" Martin shouted, only vaguely aware of what he was ordering.

Men all about poured scalding coffee, sweetened with Mexican sugar or blackstrap molasses, down their throats, and crammed big pieces of meat, seared and burned outside, raw within, into their mouths, and talked. All had their hats on. They ate rapidly, ravenously, feasting on bear, beef, venison. Steaks sizzled for a minute in the frying pan, were flopped over, thrown on a plate, served. Flapjacks were tossed high into the air, dexterously caught in the pan. It was like the rude banquet hall of a robust primitive people, and theirs was a rude, unconscious arrogance of health and self-assurance.

Each mouthful of food, through the three meals of the day, averaged for these ravenous men about ten cents a bite.

As each miner went out he paused at the door, told the proprietor what he had eaten, handed over his pouch, and the proprietor seldom touched the gold scales, but with finger and thumb helped himself. There were no arguments, no suspicions, no watchfulness. It was long before the miners realized that these shop-keepers robbed them, brazenly.

Near Burton the talk was of a man who since about four o'clock that morning had been bucking Stewart Dawes' bank, hitting it hard.

A lean, thin, waspish looking sun-burned man across the table was saying—

"—I got money, an' here it is, that he breaks that gambler's bank? Any you fellers want it?"

Men were too busily eating to take the time to bet with him.

"Who is he?" asked Burton, lifting a peeled egg.

"Him?" said the waspish man. "He's Dick Hales. He don't know me from Adam's left foot, but I know him, by ——! I was in the war—so was he. I seen him——"

Some one asked:

"What kind of a fellow is he?"

"Say, he'd fight anything, that feller. Hales? Say, he'd fight a rattlesnake an' give it first bite!"

"Ain't he the fellow that bought out the Washington Hall last night?"

"If that ain't just like it!" cried the waspish man in disgust. "One o' the best scouts in the Army, next to Dave Crockett and old Kit himself. An' he could go right where Dave 'r Kit 'r nobody else could go. He growed up mostly down somewheres in Californy. Can look like a greaser till he'd

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fool a Mexican's own mother. I was in the Rangers myself."

The Texan looked about slowly. Men, some of them, paused a moment in their eating and looked up, listening expectantly.

"He done a lot o' things, but onct the greasers was camped on a hill, like over there"—he touched a coffee cup—"valley here"—he drew his finger along the table. "Americans here on this hill. A Mexican off'cer on the purtiest hoss I ever seen—an' he shore could ride, too, that feller. He come out under a white flag, with sword, gun an' lance—them greaser lances was shore bad medicine. He dares ary gringo to come out an' fight him a duel. There was hundreds of us yellin' at our off'cers to get picked to go out an' fight 'im. An' some of the off'cers was yellin' to their s'perior off'cers too. But Dick Hales he don't ask anybody. He just saddles up an' goes streakin' out for Mr. Mex!

"Hales can ride with anybody, he can. He come to Californy long 'fore you fellers knowed there was such a place. An' he talks the lingo like a greaser's own mammy.

"First rush, sword to lance, Hales he cuts the lance right in two as they pass. Then they rein up, face about, charge again, sword to sword. —— it was purty! They fight like ——, with hosses prancing about straight up on their hind legs. That greaser shore was a good fighter. Hales he breaks his sword an' that Mex—I don't like greasers, un'erstand, but that one was a gentleman. He was!"

The Texan glared from left to right, ready to fight anybody that sneered.

"The Mexican, he saluted—then snapped his sword over the horn of his saddle. An' Hales, who'd drawed his gun, put it back in the holster, an' saluted too. Two armies was a-watchin', an' you couldn't hear a sound.

"Then they rode about a hundred yards off, drawed their guns, an' come together ——-f'r-leather. Hales killed him. Yeah.

"When Hales he come ridin' back, an' we yelled an' carried on, cheerin' him—know what he said? He said, 'Shut up, you fools! I feel like I'd killed my brother!' Y'see, him living in Californy so long, he didn't hate greasers much. He'd fight 'em. Didn't hate 'em."

A man that had paused in his eating to listen now remarked hoarsely—

"That greaser was crazy—breakin' his sword when he had the chanct to kill this Hales."

The Texan answered slowly, looking for trouble—

"Them, I allow, is sentyments fittin' for a polecat!"

He paused; there was silence. The man chewed on and on, as though he had not heard. Other men who had held themselves in readiness to duck, straightened up, relaxed, returned to their chewing.

"Hales," said the Texan, "when he broke his sword drawed his gun. But when the greaser saluted instead o' strikin' at him, Hales he put his gun back in the holster. Hales could shore have got that greaser then, 'cause he can shoot quick as goda-'mighty's lightnin'—the which, I allow, is some quick. An' they was gentlemen, fightin' of a duel—not two polecats, the which has sentyments same as yourn. You hear me?"

The man may have colored under his beard, but he gave no sign. He fastened his eyes on his plate and chewed, chewed, chewed, swallowing the insult easier than the tough meat.

X

HEAVY gambling interested almost every one, and after breakfast Burton and Martin joined the deep group of silent men encircling the table where Stewart Dawes, who appeared never to need sleep, had for twenty hours been dealing monte. There was no lookout at the table. But one man was playing. This was quite enough. Hales was betting from one to five thousand on each turn of the card. The table in front of Hales was heaped high with gold.

Hales had been shaved. His clothes were cleaned of dust. His jacket of embroidered deerskin was open and exposed a wide belt of soft leather, studded with silver. The belt had many small pouches in which he carried tobacco, matches, corn husks for cigarets.

He gambled heavily, but he watched Dawes like a man who knew the tricks of monte. He had a disconcerting way of looking steadily at a man before speaking, and was abrupt of speech. One of those rare runs of luck that occasionally attend some men had come to him.

He had begun to play about four o'clock

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in the morning. It was about eight o'clock when, during one of the lulls in which Dawes shuffled a fresh deck of cards Hales straightened up and ran his glance over the faces of onlookers.

A dozen men spoke to him, many voices together. They were the sort of men who would praise a winner, any time. They were eager to say something, particularly to one who, judging from the Washington Hall episode, would probably throw away his winnings on those who flattered him.

Hales was inattentive. His face was tired, as if with an inner, mental, weariness. He gambled for the sort of relief that some other man might have sought at the mouth of a whisky bottle.

Hales' eyes now paused in their circling of the faces.

Far off at the outer edge of the crowd he had glimpsed a young Spaniard; and Hales stood up, stared steadily for a moment, recalling a low, squat thick-walled adobe house, buttressed with whole timbers at the doorways, covered with red tile on the nearly flat roof. Dogs prowled and scratched themselves in the sun. Lazy Indians, men and women, drifted about under the shade of fig trees and live oaks, idling at their easy work.

Hales beckoned; and Don José Roderigo Valazquez de Sola pressed through and came near Hales as the crowd gave way, regarding the young Spaniard, who held himself so aloof and almost insolently, with curiosity.

Hales, glancing toward Don José's revolver, said—

"You've reached the city as soon as I did. Thought you weren't coming? Why didn't you come with me?—Indians stole my horse—that one you gave me. I had to track them on foot. Lost a week. Lost all count of days."

"The horse, señor, you got eet?"

"Yes."

Don José smiled faintly. He knew that this man had also got the horse-thieves, which was not unpleasing. The de Solas bred horses.

"Señor, eet was after you go that I fin' reason to come." He smiled a little, not pleasantly, as he glanced about the faces of the Americanos standing near.

"Here"—Hales carelessly picked up the first bag of gold dust his hand fell on and lifted it toward Don José—"I'll buy back that gun."

"Pardon, señor, but no."

"I'll pay what you say. This is worth a dozen like it."

"No, Señor, there is but one more that is like eet," and Don José looked toward the revolver at Hales' side.

HALES, leading a horse that limped, had, a few miles south of Monterey, stopped late one afternoon at the rancho of Don Miguel Carrillo, who held a thousand and more square miles of valley and mountainous foothills under the Spanish grant to his forefathers.

He was met by a score of yelping dogs, the savage gaze of three or four small wiry wild-looking *vaqueros* that loafed under a *remada* by the corral, by the steady sullen eyes of many Indians; and then by Señora Carrillo herself who stood doubtfully in the great doorway. She was a rather stout, young looking woman, almost pretty, with the composure and bearing of a good-natured grand dame.

Hales, hat in hand, walked to the doorway and bowed to her.

"Oh," she said uncertainly, as if not knowing whether or not to feel relieved, "you are an Americano!"

He told her who he was.

"Ah," she nodded, understanding, "of the Venegos Rancho. Your uncle is dead. Some Venegos they fought for Mexico. I have heard. It was you that killed Carlos Venegos!"

Hales' uncle had settled in California twenty years before, married into the Venegos family, and being a gentleman was respected, being wealthy had acquired large holdings and furnished the leather firm of his brother in Boston thousands upon thousands of hides each year.

"Yes, señora. During the war I had the misfortune to kill Carlos Venegos in a duel fought between the armies. Because of my uncle's influence many of the Venegos favored the United States. Some went into the Mexican Army. I joined the Army in Texas, partly so that I would not be so likely to meet my friends among the enemy—then had to fight Carlos Venegos between the lines. I did not know who he was until I saw his face over the point of his lance. It was then, señora, too late to draw back. Two armies watched."

Señora Carrillo nodded sympathetically.

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"Don Miguel did not like Mexico, but he did not want gringos to have California. He wanted Californians to have California."

"Señora, an urgent message reached me from a vessel that came to San Pedro, and I am in great haste to reach San Francisco. I started with a spare horse with a light pack of food and my purse wrapped in the poncho. Bad luck loves me! Two days ago that horse, when I thought he grazed while I stopped to make coffee, went off. I followed a little way until I became convinced that he had started back for the rancho and would not pause until he got home. I was in haste and could not return. So I came on. Today this one went lame. I need a fresh horse. I have little to offer in exchange."

Señora Carrillo fretted graciously over whether or not she dared to give Hales a horse. Don Miguel had taken a big herd of horses toward Sacramento where Americans were paying fabulous prices. Don Miguel was easily displeased, sometimes. Señor Hales could have food, rest, shelter for as many days as he liked, but he must wait for Don Miguel to return, though it might be ten or twenty days.

Hales had no intention of waiting much longer than over night. He was given food, a bed, and an hour of Señora Carrillo's conversation in the presence of Indian women who worked on baskets on the floor in a corner, while she sat in a heavy hide-bound chair in the dim coolness of the great room and talked gossipingly.

From time to time Hales caught sight of a pretty young girl, of about fifteen, who shyly peered at him through a curtain.

The next morning while Hales was examining the leg of his horse, a young man of high Spanish caste rode down through the oaks of a round-topped hill.

He came up with a quiet assurance though señora Carrillo regarded him coolly, with disfavor. His politeness was flawless. He took no notice of the señora's disfavor, and a pretty, eager, girl's face furtively peering in the doorway showed why he had come, and indicated that at least one person in the house was joyful at the sight of him. It was also evident that he was well liked by the Indians and *vaqueros*. When Señora Carrillo was not looking he passed a note to an Indian woman who concealed it with the deftness and impassivity of one accustomed to bearing surreptitious letters.

José de Sola regarded Hales with a trace of suspicion. It was easy for young girls to have their heads turned by strangers.

"Señor," said Hales, "I need a horse. I've only a cripple to offer, now; but I am Hales of the Venegos Rancho and will pay later."

José's young handsome face lighted slightly at Hales' name, but his manner remained aloofly courteous. Even at this time he did not greatly like gringos.

Until the gold rush, horses were cheap, the average horse selling for three to five dollars. But at Sacramento these same horses began to sell for a hundred dollars, the price rose rapidly to a hundred and fifty, reached two and three hundred.

Hales offered his crippled horses and the rifle thrown in for anything in the way of a horse that José cared to give; but José asked about one of the revolvers.

Hales would almost as readily have parted with one of his fingers.

Don José tried the revolver, and shot with surprising accuracy and quickness, though the Californians were rarely skillful with firearms. They cared little for hunting, and in personal encounters used knives chiefly, or from horseback the reatas, which they threw with amazing accuracy.

"Señor, for this gun I will give you a horse. In one hour I shall return."

Don José rode off.

While he waited, Hales could hear from within the house señora Carrillo scolding the youthful Lucita. The señora used harsh words against the young man, and Lucita protested tearfully.

"He comes because your father is not here!"

"He comes to find my father! José is without fear of any man!" Lucita wailed.

"He has told you as much. Oh children were not such fools when I was young!"

"But I love him!"

"May the Virgin protect you! May your father come soon!"

"My father loves brave men. José is handsome and brave. I shall die!"

"You shall wed Señor Guerrero within the month! There is the man for a foolish girl."

"He is my father's age and has children more than mine! I shall die! He is ugly. There are warts on his nose!"

"So much the better," said the señora, who used the be-warted nose of the worthy Señor Guerrero for a bugaboo. "You will

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never be jealous, knowing that other women do not want him."

"I shall die!"

"Senor Guerrero has had two wives and can teach a foolish girl the duties of a house!"

When Señora Carrillo came from the house and into shade of a fig tree, she fretfully unfolded her troubles to Hales, and called José as many bad names as a Spanish lady may use. The language conveniently places many at the disposal of the most respectable women.

Hales sympathized with the pretty Lucita's woe, and ventured to point out that José was a handsome youth, and a remarkably fine shot with a revolver.

"Ah but señor, though ugly men are always bad husbands, the handsome are not always good!"

"The de Solas are well known, señora. Of good birth."

"Señor, señor!" she protested, "to hear every *caballero* in this land tell of his family you would think the King of Spain had sent all Castile to California. José Roderigo Velazquez de Sola—poh! My husband, Don Miguel, has other names for him, and those de Solas. Gold is got in other ways than honest men get it!"

"The de Solas are a wealthy family, señora. Their horses are famous."

"Those horses—oh!" exclaimed the señora excitedly. "Two years ago at Monterey Don Miguel's Zapateodor for the first time lost his race, and to a de Sola! Don Miguel had waged five thousand head of cattle. Oh, señor, it was a heartbreak to see the beautiful Zapateodor run behind another horse! I felt all my blood turn to tears. Those de Solas—poh!"

Hales now knew that a horse race had bred the feud. He replied with earnestness—

"Señora, I am sure Don José is a man of honor. Why, I would trust my life on his word—as on the word of any high-born Californian. He is a gentleman. It is in his face, señora."

"Ah, but señor, how he gambles!"

"He is a Californian, señora!"

"The —— fly off with him!" said the exasperated señora.

Hales was about to answer when a rustling not far off attracted his attention and he turned in time to catch sight of a slim girlish body disappearing behind the foliage of a grape arbor. Lucita had been listening.

Señora Carrillo had also detected the little culprit and hastened into the house after her.

Don José's hour, with Spanish elasticity, extended beyond three; but he returned leading a horse of the famed de Sola breed.

Hales disliked giving up either of the revolvers. They were beautifully made; in fact had been specially designed by Col. Colt for a wealthy American officer; and he, dying after a battle, had presented them to Hales.

But there was nothing else to offer that Don José wanted; and he had to have a new horse or find himself afoot—as he did anyhow two nights later when a pair of Indian thieves cut his hair-picket rope. The Indians had evidently mistaken him for a Spaniard, and Spaniards disliked being afoot too much to follow a trail. But Hales, afoot, took up the trail and followed it; and having gone so far as to swear he would get back the horse if it took a year, kept to the trail until he came one night to where they had made camp.

When he had left the Carrillo Rancho Don José rode with him a short distance, rather companionably.

"My brother," said Don José, "is now at Sacramento with horses. We have heard that Americanos pay as much for one horse as twenty are worth. But I, señor, I shall not go to the mines. Important affairs keep me at home."

Hales understood; and felt that the little Lucita was enticing enough to keep almost anyone near home.

XI

HALES, now having seen Don José in the crowd about the gambling table, had thought at once of buying back the revolver.

"Name your price," Hales told him, speaking in English.

"Pardon, señor, eet is not to be sold."

"I don't blame you," said Hales, who was wholly ungifted in the art of barter. "It's one of the best guns ever made. Shoots like a rifle and handles like a glove."

"Si, señor. Eet does."

"We'll put up a target. The man that makes the best score takes both guns."

Don José smiled faintly and shook his head—

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"Perhaps you do shoot the better than I shoot, señor. But I do not need two guns, both like this one. No. One eet is enough."

"I don't need it either, but I want it. They are mates. Like two lovers. Sell me that gun, Don José—won't you?"

"What has money to do with love, señor?"

"A horse race sometimes has a good deal to do with it."

Don José gave him a surprized look, then his smile broadened—

"Si, señor. Eet was I who rode against Don Miguel's Zapateodor."

"And you will never be forgiven."

"I have the fear, not."

Stewart Dawes, after patiently shuffling and reshuffling as he listened, put out the cards to be cut.

"Don José," said Hales, "I'll deal you monte. My gun against yours."

José, as he rolled a cigaret, glanced about him and noted the watchfulness of every face. In a way it was more than a challenge to him, it was the challenge of an American to a Spaniard. Stewart Dawes bent his thin lips just enough to suggest a sneer. Don José, deftly rolling and holding the unmoistened cigaret, struck a match, touched flame to the tip of the cigaret, shook out the match, and said quietly—

"Si, señor."

A vague murmur of excitement stirred across the lips of spectators.

"We'll cut for deal."

"You deal, señor."

Hales picked up the deck and passed it to Don José, who waved it indifferently aside, refusing the cut.

Hales threw down the layouts. Don José drew his revolver and placed it on a card. Not a sound could be heard about the table as the cards fell. Then the card dropped that made Don José the winner.

Hales glanced down for a moment, then laid aside the pack. Reaching around for his gun with the left hand, which with a gun-fighter was a sign of peaceable intentions, he drew it; and, grasping it by the barrel, extended it, butt-first, to Don José.

The Spaniard leisurely inhaled, blew the smoke upwards, shrugged his shoulders slightly, barely shook his head.

"Keep eet, Señor Hales. Weeth my complimentos."

Hales scrutinized him with puzzled gaze.

"I was not playing for fun. It is yours."

"Pardon, señor. Permeet that I should repay for the kind words that you spoke for me under the feeg tree."

"I don't know what you are talking about," said Hales, who at the moment all but forgot that he had ever been under a fig tree while a pretty eavesdropper spied on his conversation with her mother. "But you won both guns. Sell me this one." He offered a buckskin bag.

"No, señor, no! Permeet that I should have, plees, the pleazure of making to you a geeft!"

Don José bowed courteously, stepped back, and withdrew between the men who stared curiously, not understanding what it was all about, not understanding in the least the punctilious graciousness of a greaser.

Hales looked at the gun, looked after Don José, then thoughtfully scratched the tip of his ear.

"Puts on fine airs for a greaser, eh?" said Stewart Dawes' low cold voice as with noiseless flutter he ran the evenly divided deck of cards together.

Hales frowned.

"I'll tap your bank for that remark."

Dawes lifted his eyes with the steadiness of a man whose eyes were lidless. He said nothing. His fingers were as nerveless as so much ivory. He laid the cards down for the cut.

Hales watched the slim white fingers. The first draw was made. Without removing his glance so much as to see what cards were down, Hales tapped the table with his left hand—betting on a card at which he did not look.

The cards were drawn off slowly. Then a burst of murmurs from the on lookers said—

"There she is!" "He wins!" "By——; what luck!"

Men laughed a little nervously. Some talked loudly, praising Hales behind his back but for his ears—

"He don't need to go to the diggin's!"

Dawes calmly pushed every coin and bag in sight across the table. Nothing was counted. Dawes was one of the wealthiest gamblers in the city, but now he was broke. He knew that Hales had more than enough to equal the amount that had been in the bank.

The gambler, without a sign of vexation,

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picked up his derringer, dropped it into his coat, touched the handle of his knife under his coat, and standing up, ready to go, said—

"Gentlemen, the game is closed."

"Just a minute," Hales answered. "I don't know how much is here. But I'll play it all, on one card."

"A little over twenty thousand," said Dawes, with an air of quiet indifference that somehow suggested a little irritation. "There are no tables open now prepared to accept such an amount. But if you care to wait a few minutes, I may be able to accommodate you," this with a vague trace of a sneer that no man could have put his fingers on, but which men felt.

"I'll wait," said Hales.

Without leaving the table he sent out for a cup of coffee and a plate of fried eggs.

XII

STEWART DAWES, walking with an erect composure, speaking to no one, and acknowledging the greeting of a man here and there with a reserved nod, ascended the stairs leading to the office at the rear of the Magnolia.

This had not only been the office, but the living quarters of Monsieur Max, who had a taste for luxury as well as an eye, two eyes, for business.

Short steep stairs led to this balcony. There were also stairs from the street, or rather alley.

Dawes knocked lightly.

In the moment the door was opened by a straight, tall, dark woman who had the haughty bearing and dignity of some kind of primitive priestess. She was middle-aged, with high cheek bones, and dark eyes that looked as if instantly ready to flash with anger.

Dawes, who had never seen her before, regarded her with an impersonal gaze.

"What you want?" she asked. Her voice had an odd huskiness, not hoarse, not harsh, even smooth, but nearly guttural. She spoke English clearly enough, but as if reluctantly.

"I desire," said Dawes, inflexibly formal, "to speak with Mr. Cronin."

Cronin was the new house-manager of the Magnolia. He had been in San Francisco, in the employ of the French Gambling Syndicate, for some time.

"He not here."

She made as if to close the door in his face, but was stopped by a woman's voice from across the room, asking:

"What is it, Kredra?"

Kredra, without glancing around, and keeping her eyes on Mr. Dawes' pale face, answered rapidly in some outlandish tongue. She was interrupted sharply by the young woman who did not have any interest in Kredra's unfavorable opinion of Mr. Dawes, as expressed to his face, though in a language not ten, if so many, people in that city of Babel could have understood.

"Mr. Cronin is not in," said Ilona Tesla from the divan where she sat in the midst of French cushions. "Is there any message?"

Mr. Dawes was quite used to having women, such women as were in the city at this time, think well of him. His cool expressionless reserve passed for an aristocratic manner, and in his lifetime it had not been beyond the modesty of many women to tell Mr. Dawes that he was handsome. He was not at all surprized to find a woman, two women here.

He could not see the face of this woman clearly. The apartment was low of ceiling and dark. Monsieur Max had gone to the extravagance of putting in some glass on the balcony to shut out the drifting clouds of tobacco smoke, and partly deaden the sound of voices when he tried to sleep. The apartment was always dark, and even now a large kerosene lamp, its flame obscured by a pink glass shade on which naked cherubs played amid clouds of rosebuds, was on the table; but its glow did not reach the girl's face.

"I wish," said Dawes, "to speak with some member of the new company that has bought the Magnolia. I understand that the Magnolia intends to bank its games. Dick Hales has just broke my bank, and is ready to play something over twenty thousand dollars on one card. The amount is large. In view of the fact that the Magnolia is going to bank all the games, I wish to inquire if the house now cared to arrange for a bet of that size."

"Who is this man?" Ilona saked.

She had heard of him, or rather had overheard her father and Cronin talking of him that morning, of the Washington Hall episode. She was interested only by a kind of curiosity that grew from an instinctive and intensive dislike of him because of what she had overheard. In her mind he now seemed

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with a kind of offensive swagger, daring somebody to bet him twenty thousand dollars on the turn of a card.

Ilona did not know where her father or Mr. Cronin was. They had been much perturbed by the death of Hubert Lee, and that morning had gone off together.

Ilona was a girl of odd heritage and curious upbringing. Her father, though a Hungarian gentleman of good family, was also a gentleman of fortune. Though trustworthy and far-sighted, he had lost social caste because of his speculations in gambling saloons and salons that at one time and another had taken him into all the European capitals. Ilona had been brought up in a sort of twilight world between the respectable and the disreputable; she was excluded from the friendship and society of the one because of her father's associations, and partly through his guidance but largely because of her own instincts she would not in the least tolerate the companionship of the other caste.

Her mother had been the daughter of a family of poor, proud, Pyrenees nobles who knew that their Spanish blood was older, and believed that it was as good if not better than that of the King himself. The de Ruz family were among the few Spanish nobles whom the Basques regarded, or had ever regarded, with anything like profound respect.

Franchita de Ruz, while visiting in Madrid, had met Mr. Tesla and married him. Her family never forgave her, not even after her death.

Ilona had been raised and watched by Kredra, this same Basque woman who had been her mother's companion from girlhood; and Ilona, to be ever near her father, whom she adored, had lived in England, France, Germany and Spain. Their companionship was very close.

Mr. Tesla, in bringing Ilona to California, had not imagined that San Francisco would be so rudely primitive. The hotels were impossible. Nothing anywhere so nearly suitable in furnishings could be found as Monsieur Max's apartment. He did not like having her so near gambling tables and a saloon, but every hotel, in addition to being barren and unsuitable, was also a gambling house; and the thin wooden partitions—if not muslin—offered hardly as much seclusion as the glass and curtains of the Magnolia balcony. Rear stairs from the alley led to the balcony, so she had been able to enter the apartment without passing through the saloon.

Mr. Tesla, though disturbed by the developments that followed the death of Lee, had sent Cronin out to look for suitable quarters for Ilona. He really preferred that she live away from the city, since it was nothing but huts, tents, flimsy wooden houses, filled with strange noisy men, who quarreled and killed one another with appalling readiness.

"There is no one," she now asked Mr. Dawes, "to accept the wager of this person?"

"Not unless the house cares to. I thought perhaps——"

"Certainly his bet will be accepted," she said quietly.

She turned to a window and for a time looked toward the table where Hales sat, with men waiting all about.

"I," she said, eyeing the gambler, "will deal against him."

"As you wish, madam!"

"And I," she replied angrily, "am not *madam*. I am Miss Tesla!"

For once the pale unperturbable face of Mr. Dawes colored slightly. He bowed, much as if his backbone had cracked and the upper part of him was beginning to fall.

Kredra, who had hated him on sight, muttered ominously; and her black eyes peered as if they saw his thoughts behind the pale skin.

Ilona descended the balcony stairs with an air of unconcern, apparently seeing no one, and not aware that men all over the room had stirred and were craning at her, some with liquor glasses half raised, forgetting to drink.

Kredra, like a shadow, was at her heels. Behind them, rigidly erect and expressionless, was Mr. Dawes.

As soon as it became evident that Ilona was going to the table where Dawes dealt, there was a surge from all sides toward that spot, where Hales now smoked a cigaret over the remains of breakfast and did not listen to the men who talked to him and about him.

As if deaf and sightless, Ilona passed among the men who with a sort of staring humbleness made way. Kredra looked into their faces, challengingly.

"'Ow 'd do Miss Tesla!" said Martin O'Day, standing almost in her way to be sure she would recognize him.

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She glanced at him, smiled readily, but appeared to see no one else, though men jammed in closely. She asked how he was, what he was doing, planning to do?

"Me an' Bill 'ere—'e's my pardner—is goin' ter the mines. We'll come back 'ere, wiv sacks of gold!"

"I am sure of it, and hope so," said Ilona.

She reached the table, paused, and gave Hales a slow appraising look. In appearance he was not quite as she had expected, not quite as he had seemed as she looked at him from the balcony. But she was, intensely, prejudiced against him. She would pardon a man many things and some sins if he were one she liked; but she was imperiously unforgiving toward those who looked favorably upon women of Madame Renault's caste; and, from what she had overheard, the Washington Hall episode placed Hales pretty low in the scale of men.

"I understand you have broken this bank, and still wish to play?"

Hales stood up, looking at her.

"Is that true?" she asked coldly.

Lady gamblers, he knew, were usually all smiles and allurement. "Yes," he said, not understanding why she seemed angry.

She seated herself. Some one pushed against the chair. It was Kredra, elbowing the little Cockney out of the way.

She picked up the cards and looked at them with uneasiness, mystified. These cards were strange, wholly unknown. Though she had been born in Spain, she did not know the Spanish deck,

"How much," asked Hales, glancing over the table where not a dollar was in sight excepting what belonged to him, "is in your bank?"

"If you do not think the Magnolia can pay its losses, very well, sir!"

She placed her hands to the table as if about to rise and leave. She really wished to leave. She knew all the intricacies of faro, but monte was nothing but a name. She did not know how to deal with these thin, tough, oddly designed cards.

Dawes had seated himself in the lookout's chair.

The bank was supposed always to have the money in sight to pay the debts made against it.

Hales picked up a handful of coin. He said, without enthusiasm—

"I'll start off with these."

She glanced from the money to his face—

"I am not offering amusement to you, but an accomodation. I understood that you wished to make a large wager—on one card."

"Show me this much in *your* bank"—he swept his hand above his winnings—"then deal for it, all."

"Is my word insufficient?" she asked with an inflectional stress that seemed to demand an apology.

"Yes madam, it is! I am playing with gold. I want to win gold—not a promise to pay, even from a lady!"

Ilona felt like throwing the cards into his face. What angered her mostly was that he took her for a woman gambler, a housewomen. She furiously resented the stupidity of men who could not instantly tell one kind of woman from another.

"I sy," Martin shouted at Hales. "See 'ere! Don't yer know 'oo yer talkin' to? 'Er father owns the bloomin' Magnolier. 'E can pay all yer 've got there wivout 'avin' to go into more 'n one pocket, 'e can!"

Hales looked at her closely; but he was not easily humbled.

"In that case, Miss," he said, "deal. Dawes here has estimated this dust and coin at twenty thousand. Deal for it."

Ilona quietly handed the deck across to Dawes, without a word. That was one way out of her difficulty.

Dawes riffled the deck noiselessly. His manner, his face, showed nothing. He put the cards into his palm, drew off the layouts, and Hales tapped a card, making his bet.

Ilona glanced toward Hales, and he, for once not watching the gambler's fingers, looked steadily at her.

At that moment voices broke into a bubbling of excitement. The spectators, more tense than those who played, announced the result as Stewart Dawes said coolly—

"The bank has lost."

"I'll play it all," said Hales.

At that every eye turned expectantly toward her. There had never been in San Francisco such a wager as this offered. Ilona, not quite daring to accept so tremendous a wager, was too irritated to refuse. She hesitated.

Kredra spoke to her rapidly, and Ilona, startled, glanced up just as Mr. Tesla agitatedly pushed his way through the crowd, followed by two men who had entered the Magnolia with him.

Mr. Tesla reached the table as she stood

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up. His face was pale. He spoke in French—

"*Mon dieu!* Ilona! Why are you here! Like this! Have you gone mad! My child, this is appalling! What does it mean?"

Ilona looked hastily from her father to the two strangers that, with a sort of proprietory shoving and elbowing, had followed Mr. Tesla to her chair. One was Col. Nevinson. His right arm was in a sling of black silk, though the injury to his shoulder was slight. The other was Bruce Brace.

"Father," she replied in English, with a strained effort at coolness. "This gentleman has won twenty thousand dollars from the Magnolia. You will attend to the payment?"

"Twenty thousand dollars!" Tesla looked quickly about the group of men. He was shocked to find Ilona at a gambler's table, disturbedly the loss of such a sum.

"How," demanded Col. Nevinson arrogantly, who had not clearly caught everything she said, "has the Magnolia lost twenty thousand dollars?"

"I pledged it!" she answered sharply.

"And *who* are you?" Nevinson eyed her with searching appraisal.

"My daughter!" said Mr. Tesla.

Col. Nevinson instantly changed; he removed his hat, bowed, exclaimed readily—

"Forgive me, Miss Tesla!"

She gave him a parting glance in which there was not much forgiveness, and started to move away. Col. Nevinson stepped beside her, saying to the men—

"Back, sir, back! Make way!"

"I thank you," Ilona said impersonally, ignoring his arm, ignoring him, and went off, followed by Kredra.

MR. TESLA for a moment stared after his daughter; then of Hales asked:

"Sir, may I ask as to the meaning of this? What has taken place?"

"I broke the bank and was willing to play. Dawes brought your daughter from somewhere. She said the Magnolia would guarantee payment. I won."

"Ah?" said Mr. Tesla, turning with a keen glance toward Dawes. "Ah." He appeard as though about to say something sharp to Dawes, but again addressed Hales: "So that was the way. The Magnolia, however, at present does not bank its games——"

Eyes narrowed in a score of faces. The sympathy of the onlookers was with Hales.

"And," Col. Nevinson cut in, "the Magnolia will not pay you a —— cent! Who dealt that game?"

"Dawes!" said a half dozen voices.

"Then," said Col. Nevinson with an air of finality, "collect from Dawes!"

He glanced defiantly at the circle of rough men. Vague grumbles arose. Dawes smiled slightly. He and Nevinson were friends, or at least friendly. Hales looked steadily at Nevinson.

Mr. Tesla, with a hand half raised, asking to be heard, said—

"Beginning tomorrow the Magnolia will bank its games, some of them, but today it does not. There has been a misunderstanding. But since the amount was guaranteed in the way that it was, I, personally, will make the payment."

Grumbling voices changed into a sharp buzzing of commendation.

"Tesla," Col. Nevinson broke in hotly, "you're a fool to pay it. Your daughter was undoubtedly imposed on. She had no right to guarantee the bank—and these men knew it!"

"That," said Hales, "is a lie!"

Men scattered back from the table as straws under a puff of wind. They ducked and dodged from side to side, the more anxious even starting for the door. Dawes, himself in a sort of unbending haste, moved aside.

Mr. Tesla stood where he was, looking mystified, hardly understanding what was up. Col. Nevinson glared at Hales, much as he would have looked at a lunatic. Bruce Brace, with hand behind him, looked jerkily about, but as if keeping Hales in the corner of his eye.

"What's that!" cried Nevinson, astounded, his left hand bending toward his hip. As he reached toward his gun, Mr. Tesla caught at his arm, restraining him.

In the expectant stillness of the hall where some crouching men hung as motionless as statuary, a soft voice spoke up with sinister smoothness:

"Señor Hales has called you one liar. I too have the same opeenion!"

Don José Velasquez de Sola, with a cigaret in one hand, the other resting on his hip about three inches from the butt of the big Colt's, stared toward Col. Nevinson, and waited.

"Keep out of this, José!"

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"Si, Señor Hales. As you wish. But he has weeth him a frien' whose gun smoked las' night when the man Lee died!"

"Fire and damnation!" cried Col. Nevinson furiously. "Out of the way, Tesla. —— you, out of the way!"

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" cried Mr. Tesla, keeping in line of fire, a hand on Nevinson, and turning from one to the other. "Thisis madness!"

"Tesla, sir! Out of the way. Stand aside!"

Mr. Tesla would not stand aside. No one wanted to harm him. No shots were fired.

"—— you, Tesla!" said Nevinson, who had moved aside, only instantly to be confronted by Mr. Tesla.

"Gentlemen, no! This must not be, gentlemen!"

"Beware another time!" shouted Col. Nevinson, looking from Hales to Don José and back to Hales. "Both of you—you *greasers!*"

Then Nevinson turned on his heel and stamped off in a fury, followed by Bruce Brace, who walked like an apprehensive cadaver, with head turned backward, watchfully.

Mr. Tesla breathed deeply, relieved, still anxiously glancing toward the colonel. He drew a handkerchief and wiped his forehead and palms as he looked about with an air of troubled mystification. He did not understand the readiness of these men for deadly quarreling.

"What is your name, sir?"

"Hales. Dick Hales." José had pronounced it "Hay-lees."

"Oh?" said Mr. Tesla. "Ah, well Mr. Hales, if you will be here at one o'clock I will have the money for you."

"That'll be all right," said Hales.

Mr. Tesla had already started off, hurrying to Ilona to ask what madness had touched her.

Hales went to Don José, asking why he had been so ready to come into the quarrel; and standing apart from other men, Don José told him of the terrible outrage a party of Americanos had, but a few day's before, committed on the body of his brother.

Presently a young mulatto came up to Hales, spoke respectfully, and offered him a folded piece of letter paper.

Hales took it, opened it, read quickly, looked at the negro, and again with increasd puzzlement read the note—

Sir: I have information that concerns not only your quest, but also the safety of your life. I shall place my information at your disposal if you care to accompany the bearer of this note. E.

The E was made with an encircling flourish. The writing was a woman's.

"Who is this from?"

"Ah was tol' not to say one word, sah."

"Then go to the ——!"

"*No sah!* Ah ain't gwine back an' tell her you-all won't come. Ah knows bettah 'n dat. It's from Missus Elvira, sah. But doan't yuh tell Ah tol' yuh, sah!"

XIII

THE "good Dona," as her man Ferdinand called her, lay with hand to chin, propped on an elbow, and from her couch by a window looked broodingly out toward the sand hills, dotted with tents, where the wind danced amid the dust.

That morning, soon after she was awake, she had sent the mulatto Sam, who, being in love with Tota and quite used to being a slave since he was a runaway negro, served Elvira almost as much as if she owned him, out through the town to make inquiries as to the whereabouts of Dick Hales.

Sam knew that usually it was better for him to make up stories than to come back with an empty mouth, so he returned with an exaggerated report of the winnings that Hales up to that hour had made, and also greatly embellished the report regarding Washington Hall.

For some reason this last appeared so displeasing to Elvira that Sam hastily wriggled out of the most colorful details by saying that he repeated only what he had heard, but as for himself he did not believe it.

Elvira dressed with care, choosing black silk from throat to ankles—an artifice of dress that her clever mother had devised; and Tota got more slaps than usual for alleged awkwardness. The mistress, always particular, was this morning in an exacting mood.

When dressed, Elvira, after much rewriting, finished a note that seemed suitable and sent it off by the mulatto.

Now, awaiting his return with Hales, she lay in a sort of restless brooding and reflected upon many things, absently watching the swirling dust.

At times from this window she had seen the wind overturn the frail shacks and tents

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of the men who had perched themselves on the steep slopes of barren hills; and at such times her dark eyes widened with a look of pleasure.

Almost anything destructive pleased her if she could be an aloof spectator, as, for instance, fires which could be watched from a distance in Cuba. She had rarely missed the holiday of a public execution. The rabble filled the streets and cobble-stoned square; she, as others more genteel of manner, sat at balconies. She did not like such things as thunderstorms, or high winds at sea. When the wind that flattened the tents and shook them about like dead birds also rocked the wooden building in which she lived on the second floor, Elvira grew uneasy.

On the other hand, any hour that lacked excitement was tedious. In her idle broodings she often entertained herself with thought of what it would be pleasant to do to people whom she did not like. She was as unforgiving as pride in being unforgiving could made her. Her impulses were theatrical; she was often audacious, she was not timid, but she was more treacherous than brave.

Now as she lay on her couch looking from the window, being careful not to fall into a position that would disturb her hair or dress, she felt a glow of delight over which, however, there lay a shadow of uncertainty because she hardly knew what to do with the entanglement of lives that had come into her hands. It was like being really an enchantress thus to hold people's secrets; she could move them at will, but toward what end?

Such was her nature, her training, her caste, that she could hardly ever spin a thought, however idly, that did not show the design of vanity. She could no more help this than a silk worm can help spinning its web about its own body.

"He is come, Dona Elvira," said Tota in an eager whisper.

Elvira arose quickly, brushed the folds of her dress, smoothing the sheath of silk about her lithe body. She took up the mirror, and holding the glass at various angles examined her black hair, her face, her slender throat, its slenderness accentuated by the high collar.

Holding the mirror to Tota she said:

"Put this away, out of sight. Show him in. You are slow, stupid!"

Elvira then stood with her back to the door, looking from the window. She was excited, and uncertain of just what to say or do.

She heard Tota speak, inviting him in, heard his step, then the door closed. They were alone. Elvira hesitated, consciously wishing for the mirror that she might take another glimpse of herself before facing about. She touched her hair quickly. Her slim sensitive fingers were almost like eyes.

She turned with sinuous slowness, smiled with reserve, regarding him watchfully; but she saw nothing of surprize or pleasure in his glance. She might have been any one, and shabbily dressed.

"Madam," Hales said abruptly, "Your message was strangely worded. What have you to tell me?"

She lifted her brows, expressing mild surprize, suggesting reproof, then smiled enigmatically, and with studied slowness indicated a chair—

"Won't you be seated, señor?"

He looked at the chair but stood where he was.

"What have you to tell me, madam?"

"Many things, sir, or nothing—as you please," she answered with coolness, lifting her head, and looking at him expectantly; but his manner did not soften. He was suspicious. With a shade of kindly interest after the pause, she said— "You came to the city, looking for some one. Did you not, señor?"

"I told you as much yesterday."

"Ah, but you are looking for a woman!"

She saw, or thought she did, a flicker of expression cross his face, very much as if pricked unexpectedly. He frowned, and when she thought he was not going to reply, he said—

"There are others beside yourself who know that."

"Ah," Elvira asked with malicious kindliness, "you did not find her in Washington Hall?"

"Thank ——, no!"

"What, may I ask, for I feel that I may help you, señor, is her name?"

His stare was expressive of suspicion; but she smiled slightly, amiably. She could be tolerant since, secretly, she had all the advantage.

"No."

"No what, señor?"

"I am not here to satisfy your curiosity.

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If you have nothing more to say to me, good day, madam!"

He turned, ready to leave the room. Quickly she said, "But I do know her name. It is yours—the same as yours!" He stopped and came forward two or three steps as if to march right across her.

"I recall now," he said after a pause, "that I perhaps gave you reason to think so, yesterday."

"Ah-oh! You think that I am imposing on you, señor? Oh, is that what you think?"

"Yes."

"Why—" in a breath of astonishment—"Why would I do that?"

"I don't know."

"What interest, sir, could I possibly have in you, or your affairs—" then, more kindly—"unless I do know something to your advantage, and am generous enough to help—even one who is very rude?"

"Then please tell me."

She had no intention of playing out her hand on one throw; and groping vaguely for his gratitude, asked—

"Are you aware that your life is in danger? Are you? In great danger?"

"No."

"Ah-no? Yesterday, señor, you abused young Jerry Fletcher. He is one of the Hounds. You know of them by now, don't you?"

"Yes." With sudden energy and a tone of honest puzzlement, he added: "He struck at me because he thought I was a Spaniard. Are these men that are coming in here all fools? Just now, before I came here, I heard of another Spaniard who had been whipped—pegged out on the ground and whipped!"

"Señor," she said proudly, "I too am a Spaniard!"

"Then you had better tell your Hound friends to keep their whips off other Spaniards."

"They are not my friends, sir!" She said it loftily, but without success. He did not believe her. "They are sworn to assist one another, and some of them are dangerous men. You know that, señor?"

"No."

"I am giving you warning. I know you are a brave man, señor. You have lived in California long, have you not!"

"Yes."

These impatient monosyllabic replies exasperated her, but she hoped to break if not soften his rigid attitude.

"At the first opportunity, señor Hales, they will try to——"

"Madam, your alarm for my safety is not easily understood. You abused one of the precious Hounds as much as I."

"But I," she said calmly, "am Dona Elvira Eaton!"

He bowed stiffly, with a hint of mockery.

"Just what, may I ask, do you mean?" she asked.

"I have, since reaching San Francisco, heard the name many times."

"What have you heard?" This, suspiciously.

"Nothing that would perhaps offend you, but nothing that it would give me pleasure to repeat."

"Sir!" Her eyes widened, anger flickered in them. "What have you heard?"

He looked at her and said nothing.

"You will not answer me?"

"No."

Elvira was furious. At that moment she hated him. She felt her cheeks flush. Her impulses struggled together, whether to turn on him in a blaze of wrath, or to try soft subtilties. She did not want to drive him off, out of her presence, not while he was so ready to go. In that there would be no conquest.

It must be, she felt, for she had to explain to herself somehow his lack of courtesy toward her own desirable self, that he still loved that other woman, the wretched creature whom he had come to find. Elvira intended to prove to him that whatever he may have heard he had much else to learn of her.

Hales now was saying—

"—nothing more to tell, I will go."

"Ah yes, señor, I have more to tell. This woman you are looking for is your—your *sister*, isn't she?"

That was a hit anyhow. She smiled, solicitously, pleased to see that the muscles of his face winced slightly. Then his jaws set hard, as if he would not answer.

"Your sister, isn't it?" she insisted, pecking with questions where she knew it most hurt him.

"There is no need, madam, to tell you. If you know her, know where she is, tell me and be done with it. I'll not discuss her with you. But I'll pay—anything, for information."

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"Ah please, make no mention of money! Perhaps I can help you, a little. I am a woman. My sympathies are a woman's—for other women, unlucky, so unlucky—like myself."

He stared at her, then looked about the room, perhaps the most luxurious in the city. His glance went to her long fingers, covered with rings, passed quickly over her sheathing of silk, rested on the pendant pearls in her ears, paused on her face. He had spoken in silence more fully than if he had used words.

"Poh"—she pulled at her rings, stripped some from her fingers, held them out in her palm—"you think these trinkets can make a woman happy!"

"It is the women who think so!"

"Ah," she said with a little shiver trembling visibly over her body—then threw the rings across the room. "Little *you* know of women, sir! Supposing you found your—your *sister* as I am? What then? What would you say? Do?"

No answer, excepting the glittering stare as he seemed to appraise the trappings of her harlotry. Then a thought came full-grown into her mind, and she put it into a question—

"You would kill her?"

"Madam, you are wasting time. If you know anything of what you pretend to know, name your price and out with it! I'll pay."

"Answer me this then," she said sharply, "is Anna your sister?"

He stiffened. His head went up. In his glance mingled surprize and the anger that comes from pain.

"Answer me, señor, then I will tell you. Is Anna Hales your sister?"

He hesitated. He seemed debating; almost he shook his head—she could tell that he did. Then—

"Madam, yes!"

She knew that he lied. She nearly laughed, she was that pleased. She had tricked him into a lie. But there was no laughter, for he took a step forward, his hand came up as if to seize her. She almost wished that though in anger he would seize her. Seize her, yes; but not strike! If he seized her she might love him; if he struck, she would hate. Hers might not be the blood of Castile, but hers was the pride of Aragon.

"Madam, *where* is she—my sister?"

A defiant jeering trembled on Elvira's red lips. But she was afraid to jeer, and she almost liked being afraid. She answered humbly, but there was a wilfully secretive look in her eyes that mocked him as she said—

"I can not tell you where she is—now. But she was for a time in the city—and bitter, very bitter toward all men. We were not really friends, but I know her. Yesterday I did not at first think you meant a woman when you asked if I had heard the name. She was so cruelly abused by the man who brought her here——"

"Who?" It was more like an oath than a question.

"I don't really know," she said hastily. "Honestly, señor! I have heard of him, but not his name. I never knew her well, not very."

"Where is she? Where can I look for her?"

"I *think* she has gone to the mines—I am not sure. I would like to help—" she hesitated, doubtful whether to say, "you;" then said—"to help her. I will make inquiries and——

"Of whom? Tell me! I'll make inquiries."

"Ah, no, that would hardly do. I could find out in a roundabout way and ——"

"No need of such a way. Tell me where to go, whom to ask!"

"I really can't, for I don't really know."

"That, madam, is false! I'll have the truth from you. Out with it!"

"False? You mean I lie!" she cried, more as if hurt than angered.

He seemed to mean just that for he offered no correction. He was irritated, suspicious. He did not like her. Well, as yet he did not know her; but she would help him to learn!

Impulsively, in a subdued voice, but watching from under drooping lashes as if from ambush, she said—

"Señor, I have not told you the truth. I did not wish to hurt you so. I fear, fear your—your sister is dead. It is so easy to die in this city, and one is so soon forgotten. *Poor* Anna! I wonder where she is—now? So beautiful, at one time. Wasn't she? I will try to find her for you, señor."

"That will not do. She must be found at once before she hears that I am anywhere near. If she learns I am in the city she will hide."

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"Hide? Why would she hide from her—her *brother?* Oh no, no—not from a brother! From a husband—" the smile and glance were furtive.

"Madam, what game do you play! Where is she? Tell me, you! Tell me, you! Tell me or I'll choke it out of you!"

The good Dona swore in Spanish, then—

"What, sir! Dare touch me—you! Choke *me?* You? Ah——!"

Her slim fingers snatched at her breast and an icicle of steel flashed out. She held it as if to strike, glaring; but behind the look was the wonder of what would he do, say, now?

Hales' hand went up, his fingers caught her wrist. Her cry of pain was real. He gave her arm a twist. The dagger dropped. She bent her knees yieldingly, staggered a little, clutched his hand to pull it off.

"Now, woman, tell the truth!"

"You hurt! Please! Oh! Oh you hurt! I'll kill you for this— Oh—don't—please! You do hurt me!"

"Truth, out with it!"

She struggled with angry pull and jerk. Pain, any kind of physical pain, infuriated her. His fingers were fast, and the pain increased.

"Truth, woman!"

"Then have the truth!" she cried, physically hurt, enraged. "Go look for her in the Chilean tents! You'll find her there—somewhere! I meant to get her, put her into clothes, have her sober—be good to her, then have you come!"

Hales dropped her arm as if throwing something away. She knew that he was shocked. His gaze searched her face wrathfully.

"This is how you treat me! Go, go look till you find her! Look among rags on rubbish piles! She's there, somewhere!"

She glared at him scornfully. Her face was flushed. Her woman's pride was satisfied. She had humbled him. Her eyes met his in a level sustained gaze. Now he was convinced.

Hales turned and with heavy steps walked hurriedly from the room. The door closed sharply.

Elvira looked at the door steadily for a moment, as if seeing beyond, through the wood, as if still watching him.

She turned and glanced down at the dagger, then laughed a little. Unconsciously she rubbed her wrist. She looked at the wrist. It was ringed with a dark bracelet of a bruise. He had hurt her. The wrist felt as if sprained, but she laughed quietly. She had hurt him more than he had hurt her.

Then another daring thought popped, instantly full grown, into her mind.

She ran to the inner door, calling—

"Tota! Sam! Sam!"

Tota came first, running.

"Where's Sam!"

"In back, Dona. He is coming."

"Sam!"

"Ah's heah, missus. Ah 's heah!"

He came in, breathless.

"You know where the Red Lamb is, down near Clark's Point?"

"No, missus, Ah doan't—" but he saw the frown come on her face and anxiously added— "Ah sho' knows jes' where to fin' it. Yes, 'am, missus, Ah knows jes' where it is!"

"There's a woman—Anna Hales. Go get her. Bring her here. Don't let any one know. She may be under another name, but you can find out which is this Hales creature. And *bring* her! Understand? You hear me!"

"Yes 'am, missus!"

"Get out then, both of you! Out!"

They went, excited, in a hubbub.

Dona Elvira threw herself on the couch, hands behind her head, now careless of how she rumpled her hair or dress. Point by point she smilingly recalled the scene, every detail. She held up her wrist, looking at it, turning it about as if she wore a new and interesting bracelet. She laughed.

XIV

HALES returned to the Magnolia to wait for one o'clock and Mr. Tesla's payment. He took a seat near a corner, spread a newspaper across his knee, glanced along the headings, but nothing there was nearly so arresting as what was in his own thoughts.

Most of the gambling tables were now deserted; and the gamblers, having with methodical temptation arranged their stacks of gold coin in the center of the tables, preparatory to the heavy play that would begin during the afternoon, left this wealth entirely unguarded and strolled about with aloof composure, or drank at the bar, one with another, in a kind of distant friendliness.

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Their gold was as unwatched as if it were inviolable. And apparently, it was.

Stewart Dawes, who could not have had more than an hour's sleep, returned near one o'clock. He stood apart, thin, pale, neat, aloof, near an end of the bar where he leisurely sipped ginger beer and from time to time glanced toward Hales.

IN THE meantime Mr. Tesla was having some little difficulty in getting twenty thousand dollars by one o'clock. His character and training was such that he regarded promptness to the minute almost as essential as the payment itself.

Cronin, the house manager, had gone some miles out of the city to inquire at a Spanish rancho he knew of regarding accommodation for Miss Tesla.

Mr. Tesla, not expecting any more difficulty than if he presented a certified check, had gone to the bank of Wilcox and Westgate.

This bank was twenty-five feet wide and fifty deep. A counter, but a step or two from the door, extended across the room.

The space between door and counter was crowded with men, smoking, chewing, talking loudly. Nearly all of them held sacks of gold dust in their hands. They were a rough lot, just down from the mines. There was a thumping of bags on the counter. Clerks opened the bags and examined the dust. They could tell from the fineness of the dust, the shape of the gold grains, just about from what diggings it came. Black sand was in much of the dust, and clerks were busily drawing off this sand with magnets. Then the dust was packed in boxes, in sacks, which were stored in an underground vault. The vault in fact was nothing more than a cellar.

Behind the counter were two tables, piled with bags of gold dust and stacks of coin. Coin was at a premium. Gold was worth $18 the ounce at the Philadelphia mint; it passed current at $16 the ounce in trade in San Francisco, but as coin became more and more scarce was exchanged for as low as $10 the ounce.

Clerks received deposits and dropped them on a table. They cashed checks by reaching to a table. There were no teller windows. Toward the rear was a high sloping table, with open ledgers at which men were working hastily.

Mr. Tesla inquired for the manager and introduced himself.

Wilcox was a young man in shirt-sleeves, touseled hair, a squint in his right eye, a pen behind an ear and a chew of tobacco in his mouth.

"How air ye, Tesler? Come right in."

He raised the shelf-like gate at the end of the counter.

"Glad to meet ye, Tesler. Hear ye took Nevinson in f'r pardner. Good man the colonel, only too —— spry with a gun."

Mr. Tesla showed his letters of credit, and Wilcox examined them with curiosity, then handed them back.

"They air good I reckon, but I don't know nothin' about em. Me an' West jest started bankin' about two months ago, an' we ain't takin' chances. Give a mortgage on the Magnolier—I hear ye own most o' they now—an' ye can have the money at ten per cent. Magnolier might burn down too."

"I can't very well give you a mortgage," said Mr. Tesla, gazing in well-bred astonishment at a banker who declined paper good the world over. "I am associated with a syndicate."

"Is the colonel in the syndicate too?"

"No. The syndicate, as a syndicate, owns three-fourths of the Magnolia. Col. Nevinson and another gentleman or two own the other fourth."

"He took over Hubert Lee's share, heh?"

"He has taken the share that Mr. Lee would have taken."

"That's the way the colonel does business. When he wants somethin'—lookee out! I'll tell ye, Tesler: Git the colonel to go on your note. He's good. He'll do it. He'll do anything f'r his friends."

Much against his wish Mr. Tesla saw that he would have to go to Col. Nevinson if the payment was to be made promptly. He did not like Nevinson, whose every gesture and glance seemed at least partially inviting a quarrel.

After some inquiry, he discovered Col. Nevinson in Baer's Saloon.

This was a well-known political hangout. Baer himself was a member of the city council that voted itself big salaries and speculated thievishly in real estate. Baer's closest friend was soon to be appointed judge, a man of coarse habits, and afterwards famous for his practice of adjourning court to go out and have a drink. He had been a peanut peddler.

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NEVINSON was drinking with a number of men, most of whom were city officials or hangers-on, such as the Hounds.

As Nevinson caught sight of Tesla he waved him up to the bar.

Mr. Tesla had already learned that in this aggressive democracy one was as likely to be introduced to a bartender as to a prominent merchant, and that a handshake must follow an introduction, or a quarrel would. He shook hands freely, then asked to speak with Nevinson alone.

"All right, Tesla. All right. Come over here. Excuse me, gentlemen, while I have a word with my friend."

Nevinson's arm was in a sling, but the injury was an inconvenience, nothing serious. He could remove his arm and use it, as he presently did, to hold a pen.

He now looked at Tesla with a nearly truculent sharpness and demanded—

"What can I do for you, Tesla?"

"Will you go on my note for twenty thousand dollars?"

"For a hundred, sir!" said Col. Nevinson hotly, as if some one had expressed doubt.

"Thank you, Colonel. But the smaller sum will be sufficient."

"But wait, Tesla. You want it to pay that——! I hear his name is *Hales!*"

"Yes, so he told me."

"Ah," said the colonel, angrily thoughtful. "I understand, now. Curious, a friend of mine was just speaking of that name last night. You're going to pay him, Tesla?"

"I said I would have the money at one o'clock."

"Don't pay it! Don't pay it, I tell you, Tesla."

"But I owe it, sir."

"No you don't. Let him collect from Stewart Dawes. He dealt the game. Dawes 'll take that fellow down a notch or two. Good fellow, Dawes."

"It is I who owe it, Colonel."

"No you don't. Besides, if you *are* going to pay it, charge it off to the Magnolia!"

"The Magnolia did not bank the game."

"Damnation, sir! I know that! But tomorrow some of the games will be banked, so what's the difference? Learn how to do business, Tesla."

"But that is tomorrow."

"Tesla, you are too —— honest. I, sir, am the heaviest individual stockholder in the Magnolia Syndicate. Isn't that so? Well then, I say charge it off on the company's books as bad luck—if you are fool enough to want to pay it. I wouldn't. —— me if I would!"

"No," said Mr. Tesla with firmness, "under the circumstances I am compelled to consider the loss as personal."

"Twenty thousand dollars is a —— of lot of money, Tesla. But see here, Tesla, don't be in a hurry to pay it. If this is the Hales I think he is, by ——, sir, you won't have to pay him—not unless you want to pay his heirs!"

"Col. Nevinson!" protested Mr. Tesla.

"Yes sir, —— his soul! I have reason to believe that he has something against me. You saw this morning how he tried to force the quarrel. You saw, Tesla? And that greaser—they were waiting for me. I hate to stain a perfectly good piece of lead with his yellow blood ——"

"Colonel!" Mr. Tesla could feel his flesh creep.

"And don't ever interfere again as you did this morning, Tesla. When a gentleman has a quarrel forced on him, keep back, keep well back!"

"Colonel Nevinson, I deplore the violence between gentlemen in this city. I would ——"

"Call a greaser a gentleman! And this Hales, too, sir, is a —— greaser! That hat! His face—at least half greaser. I know how to teach those fellows. I've taught one right. They overrun this country. We Americans must keep a high hand against them. As you know, only a week or two ago I got back from my last trip to the mines. They are thick as bristles on a sow's belly up there——"

"You are willing to accommodate me then?" asked Mr. Tesla, drawing the conversation from its unpleasantness.

"Against my wish, sir, yes! I do it for you, sir, as one friend to another."

"Thank you, Colonel."

"Don't thank me. —— it, don't thank me. I don't want to do it, but when a man is my friend, sir, I stand by him. When he is my enemy, I pile all —— full of coals and send him to the ——. And every man that knows me, knows that, sir!"

"I can believe it," said Mr. Tesla.

"By the way, Tesla, convey to your daughter my humblest apology for —— bad manners this morning, sir. I did not know, sir, that you had a daughter."

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"It was quite a natural thing for you to wonder who she was. I was appalled to find her there. At present I am very anxious to find suitable quarters for her. Out of the city. With some respectable Spanish family and——"

"Why with greasers, a lady of her quality, sir?"

"She speaks Spanish and——"

"By ——, Tesla, I know the place. The very place. A Spanish rancho. A beautiful place sir, not one of those —— mud huts. About fifteen miles from the city and off the main road, sir."

"Do you think I could secure accommodations for——"

"Think! I know it, sir. I own the ranch. It is at your disposal!"

"I must say, Colonel, this is most surprizing and acceptable. My daughter is using the balcony——"

"No place for a lady, sir. If I may have the honor, I myself—this very afternoon, sir—will accompany you and your daughter to Cowden's ranch and see that everything is arranged for her comfort. That sir, is settled. And as to the other matter—no, Tesla. I won't go on your note. But I'll give you a check for the amount. Just come with me. But if that's *the* Hales—well, sir, I'll probably have trouble with him shortly."

Col. Nevinson aggressively went to the bar, drew a pad of checks, called for pen, ink and sand, withdrew his arm from the sling, and wrote: *Pay to the order of Franz Tesla* $20,000 *W. B. Nevinson.* He sprinkled the writing with sand, shook it off, and with formal graciousness gave the check to Mr. Tesla, saying—

"Any further assistance that I can be, count on me, sir! —— it, count on me. And I'll have horses ready in an hour if you are ready to start for the ranch. But by ——, Tesla, if this is the Hales a friend mentioned to me last night—don't pay him for a few days. For your own profit, sir, wait a few days!"

MR. TESLA entered the Magnolia and looked about. It was one o'clock. The gambler Dawes watched him come in, watched him go to Hales, watched them talk together.

"Here, sir," said Mr. Tesla, "is the amount. It is a check, endorsed over to you. I was afraid I would be a few minutes late if I went to bank for the money, but if you like——"

"Quite all right, sir," said Hales, standing up. He scrutinized the signature for a moment, then, absently poking it into one of the pouches of his wide belt, said: "You can have the chance at it, on one card, if you like."

"No, thank you. I never gamble—odd as it may seem, never."

Mr. Tesla was pleasant, as if there was something else to be talked of, friendly.

"You don't? Why?"

"I made it a rule many years ago."

"Everything else in life being a gamble," said Hales with a steady look, "I don't see why not risk monte."

"Few men have such luck as yours, Mr. Hales."

"They are welcome to it—if they will take it all."

"By the way, Mr. Hales," said Tesla in a conciliating tone, "you haven't any deep-rooted feeling against Col. Nevinson, have you?"

Hales' face seemed to contract in all its muscles, his eyes grew narrow, and after a thoughtful moment he said slowly:

"Nothing you might call deep-rooted, I suppose. I never saw the man before today, but I don't like what I hear or have seen of him. If he has appointed you to arrange a meeting, all right. Has he?"

Mr. Tesla gestured as if hurriedly putting aside such an idea—

"You misunderstand, absolutely! I greatly deplore the readiness of men in this city to kill one another."

Hales looked at him closely. The check was signed by Nevinson. He and Tesla were partners, but there was a convincing air of the gentleman about Tesla.

"In that case," said Hales, "I may tell you that I would not go out of my way to meet him—or to avoid him."

Mr. Tesla shook his head a little, not liking the tone. These men of San Francisco seemed to care as little for their lives as for their gold.

"From what I hear," Hales continued, "he is closely associated with the men who head this gang of hoodlums called the Hounds. I doubt if Hubert Lee had a fair chance for his life. Lee was not a friend mine, though I knew him slightly. He knew some of my relatives. I came here to find him, and didn't—until I saw him

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dead. No, I have no quarrel with Nevinson, as long as he keeps out of my way."

Mr. Tesla's feelings toward Col. Nevinson had been greatly modified during the last hour. It was part of the gambling syndicate's scheme of business always to dispose of an interest in its holdings to some citizen who was influential and politically prominent, so that the syndicate would have a friend in the local affairs. Hubert Lee had been such a man; but from that point of view, Nevinson was as good, even better.

"Mr. Hales, can you tell me, does that young Spaniard carry a feud with Col. Nevinson?"

"Not what you might call a feud, sir. But I can tell you this, Mr. Tesla. José de Sola is right on edge looking for trouble with any gringo that wants it. And I don't blame him. He would just about as soon shoot Nevinson as anybody, or a little sooner, on account of a remark Nevinson dropped—something about whipping greasers—about knowing of one that had been whipped. That's hitting José on an open wound. Up at the mines not long along some Americans pegged out José's brother on the ground and whipped him. Had tried to buy a horse he wouldn't sell—wasn't his horse, anyhow. They met him on the road and offered to buy the horse. The price they offered was fair enough, but it wasn't his horse. He didn't want to sell. They took the horse anyhow, and tossed him a bag of dust. He threw the bag back into the face of one of them. They gave him a rawhiding to teach him manners. Took his horse. He begged them to kill him. They laughed at that, not understanding how a Spaniard feels about having a whip laid on his shoulders. Then left him on foot."

"Atrocious!" said Mr. Tesla, with feeling.

"Yes,—— dangerous, too. The de Solas are prouder than kings. There were three Americans. All of them strangers. It happened only two or three weeks ago. José, as soon as he heard about it, came up here to San Francisco to look around and see if he could find the horse—and who owns it. They haven't much else to go by, unless his brother, Don Esteban happens to meet the men face to face. I know just about what will happen. Don Esteban de Sola has already called up the *vaqueros* from his ranch, and he will gather about him all the *banditti* that have been on the trails. As long as he lives he will hunt for those men, and when he is dead José and the other Spaniards will hunt for them. I don't understand what fools my countrymen are—strike a Spaniard. My ——, I'd rather poke my face up against a coiled rattlesnake!"

"Mr. Hales, neither do I understand these men, this country."

"Neither do other people, calling Spaniards greasers, whipping them, stealing from them. Californians are prouder than sons of kings! And count on it, the de Solas are going to have revenge—not only revenge, but one that pleases them."

"Shameful. Shameful," said Mr. Tesla. "I too know something of Spaniards. At one time I lived in Spain."

"I hadn't been in this city ten minutes before a fellow struck me with a whip, thinking I was a Spaniard. Why, if I had been a greaser, as he called me, I'd have killed him—then and there. I don't understand what Americans are thinking about."

Mr. Tesla went toward the balcony. When he had mounted the steps and disappeared, Stewart Dawes replaced his glass on the bar, flicked a speck or two from his dark sleeve, and with a leisurely air started across the room toward Hales.

XV

HALES had picked up the newspaper and was standing, giving the headlines a parting glance to see if there was anything of interest.

As the gambler came near, Hales looked up, and seeing who it was, went on reading.

Dawes stopped, and after waiting a moment said coolly—

"May I have a word with you, Mr. Hales?

Hales lowered the paper, looked questioningly, waited, then asked—

"What is it?"

"My funds are rather low, Mr. Hales," said Dawes quietly, but with something enigmatic in his low even tone.

"You want a chance at what I've won? All right."

"That isn't quite what I had in mind," Dawes replied with imperturbable reserve. "I am, sir, almost entirely without funds."

"I see. You want a loan? Maybe that can be arranged too."

"Yes"—the word was pronounced slowly,

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drawn out— "Yes, in a way. In a way, sir."

"What do you mean? Just what? Out with it."

"You have hit my bank pretty hard, Mr. Hales."

One side of Hales' mouth twisted slightly into something like a smile—

"You want me to try again? I've offered to do that. Make your game."

"Your last bet, and the largest, Mr. Hales, was not against my bank," said Dawes significantly, though just what the tone signified was not easily seen.

Hales looked at him, mystified and not pleasantly. There was the shadow of something subtle in the gambler's manner.

"What the —— are you driving at, Dawes? It wasn't your money that I won, but you dealt, didn't you?"

"That," said Dawes with a thin illuminating smile, "is just it. I dealt and—" He stopped.

"And what?"

"And," Mr. Dawes lifted his eyebrows, "you won."

"I've usually won against your deal, haven't I?"

"Yes"—again the word was drawn out quietly, sibilantly—"yes, but this was just a little different."

Hales glared, and a frown gathered and deepened on his face as the meaning of what this gambler was trying to convey became clear. Then the newspaper dropped with a rustling flutter as his fist came up over his shoulder and struck Dawes in the face, knocking him clear off his feet, backward to the floor.

On the floor the gambler writhed, pulling at his gun. Hales, his own gun drawn, jumped forward and stepped on the gambler's arm as if on a snake, pinning it to the floor.

Dawes cursed him, furiously. His thin face was whiter than chalk. He did not struggle. Hales, with the gun at his hip, held the muzzle toward the gambler's head, and Dawes looked straight into it, expectantly.

Hales, with his foot, crushed the gambler's fingers until they loosened the butt of the derringer, then he kicked it across the floor. He stepped back, looking warily at the crowd, which now, seeing that bullets were not about to fly, gathered near excitedly.

"Dawes! You get up and get out! And don't ever come near me again, you —— blackleg!"

"What's the muss?"

"What's the row?"

"What's he done, Hales?"

"What's the trouble, fellers?"

Hales glanced at the men, but did not answer. He stepped back, with smooth quickness returning the gun to its holster.

The excited onlookers babbled among themselves, asking, guessing, about the row. They were not used to having men keep quiet in their quarrels, and the unfriendliness of Hales toward the crowd, the silence of the gambler, increased their wonder.

Dawes, except for a red swelling on one cheek, paler than he would be when dead, got up without haste and without looking at any one. His lips were pressed as tightly as the line of a scar. He slowly rubbed his right arm from elbow to wrist. The skin was broken on his hand and blood trickled. He was breathing hard but slowly; yet, a gambler to his fingertips, he took his humiliation with an icy poise that was very like dignity.

A friendly hand picked up his hat, brushed it slightly, held it out to him. Dawes took the hat in silence. He touched his collar, adjusted his cravat, brushed absently at the splotches of dirt on his black clothes, then, straightening up, walked off without a glance toward any one. He walked unhurriedly.

"He'll kill you, Hales, sure! First chance!" said some one eagerly.

"What was the trouble, Mr. Hales?"

"Why didn't you shoot him?"

"Have a drink, Mr. Hales?"

"No!" said Hales shortly, then walked off, his fingers fumbling in a pouch at his belt.

He started for the door, but glanced back and up toward the balcony. He stopped, turned on his heel and went toward the rear of the Magnolia.

As he reached the top of the short stairs the door opened.

Mr. Tesla had seen a part of the incident and had seen Hales coming.

Tesla asked a little anxiously:

"What is it, Mr. Hales? What now is wrong?"

Ilona, across the room, sat erectly on the divan, listening. Kredra, from the shadows, peered like a sybil watching auguries.

"Here"—Hales held out the check—"Dawes just asked me to split with him.

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Said he dealt so I could win. He may have lied, but I can't keep this now."

Mr. Tesla looked from Hales to the offered check, but did not reach for it. He drew back slightly, saying—

"I don't quite understand? You are returning this?"

"Yes. Dawes didn't say out and out that he cheated on the deal"—Hales with a sort of absent movement of fingers tore the check in two and across—"but he took a lot of trouble to make me think that's what he meant. And he wanted a split. Here's the check, sir."

He held out the torn pieces. Mr. Tesla took them as if a little reluctantly into his palm, then—

"I hardly know what to say, Mr. Hales. I—this is astonishing. But, sir, unless you are thoroughly satisfied that the deal was dishonest——"

"I'm enough satisfied that I don't want it. Besides, under all the circumstances, perhaps I ought to have refused it anyhow. Blackleg gambler—I don't doubt at all but that he did cheat."

"In a way, Mr. Hales, I dislike to accept the return of this. The wager was made, you won. It is really very unusual. A large sum, too. Few men would feel about it as you do."

Hales, rolling a cigaret, glanced up sharply, then with slight shake of head—

"You're wrong, I know lots of men that would."

Holding the cigaret between his fingers, he touched his sombrero with the suggestion of a military salute, turned and went down the stairs.

Mr. Tesla looked after him, then, with a nearly mystified expression, looked down at the torn paper in his hand. He pushed the door closed and went to Ilona.

"Here! Here, Tempeté—" he held out the scraps of paper—"What do *you* say? Think? These Americans! I understand them not at all. When I am sure they are gold mad, all of them—then this! Anything, *anything* can happen in such a country. Amazing! What do you say, Tempeté?"

Ilona, whom her father at times affectionately called Tempeté, raised a slim hand and stirred the pieces of paper on his extended palm.

"I would not have expected it of *him*, Father."

"Of him? What do you know of him? I would never have expected it of any man—not in this city. It is amazing——"

THEN, presently, he resumed telling her of the rancho that Col. Nevinson owned, to which they were going that afternoon.

"I must go now and have a few words with Cronin as I won't be back until tomorrow. He is not to let Dawes have a table here again. There are some other things to tell Cronin, too. Whom," he asked with a kind of amused interest, "is Kredra anathematizing?"

He stared toward the shadows where the Basque woman squatted and mumbled to herself in a low-voiced chant.

"The gambler. From the first glance she took a dislike to him."

Mr. Tesla laughed, but said:

"Nothing good ever comes from any one that Kredra dislikes—and you see what Dawes did. Sometimes I feel that she really thinks she *is* a prophetess."

"Oh, she is quite sure of it," said Ilona.

Mr. Tesla went out.

As soon as he was gone, Kredra raised her voice, continuing the chant, calling down misfortune upon some one.

"Kredra! Kredra!"

"Yes little one."

"Quiet, please. You mumble nonsense."

She arose quickly. "I call a curse. White-faced shadow of the Evil One! E-ah!"

She glared alarmingly, her body suddenly crouched, and the deeply set black eyes blazed.

"Why Kredra, what's wrong with you?" Ilona asked tolerantly. "Why such unreasonable hate for that gambler?"

"I do not know," she said wearily, with puzzled shake of head, and coming up close to the girl. "But I smell evil in him. I hate him! Something, something—I feel it. Almost I can tell, but it escapes me. Yet I hate him!"

"You old witch-woman, I hate you!" said Ilona, dropping her hand affectionately on Kredra's shoulder. "You mumble charms, dear old witch."

"I call a curse!"

"On me, no doubt."

"No! On the snake-eyed one that walks upright! His heart is a red stone! His face is evil and I feel a hurt here, here!" She

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pressed her hands to her breast. "May Death use him for a feast!"

XVI

NIGHT came, and the Magnolia was again ablaze with lights, astir with men. Tobacco smoke in filmy clouds floated overhead.

The negro orchestra thumped and strummed.

Behind the bar the great mirror, with its ill-fated blot like a star of ill omen permanently fixed near its center, reproduced in fleeting pantomime the gestures of the bartenders, the glass-tossing of the men that seemed to fling the liquor down their throats, the striding to and fro of fellows who were in haste, the absent loitering and drifting of lonely men.

"There, there, sir," said Judge David Deering with sonorous depth of voice to his companions, "in the ephemeral shadows of a broken mirror, sir, we may read the destiny of our race. These scenes, sir, these stirring scenes in which you and I are humble characters, mere spear-bearers sir, have no more permanency then the images that appear and vanish in that ill-starred glass. Nations, sir, races, Egyptians, Persians, Latins, Saxons, sir, are but shadow shapes that come and go across——"

"Drink, Judge, drink! This isn't the time for an oration!"

"In the midst of revelry, sir, we should pause with solemn thought," said the Judge amiably, amusing himself. "The ancient Egyptians, sir, presented a mummy at their feasts that all might——"

"Our mummy's out there on the Plaza tonight, calling upon the city to repent!"

The Rev. Ezekiel Preble, convinced through the bountiful generosity of the city and the kindness of newly found friends that God had forgiven him, rose as if by a miracle from the bed in the home of a fellow preacher and, taking his Bible, went on the Plaza that evening and began to preach.

Many listened admiringly, for he preachd hell-fire and damnation. Tall, gaunt, black-bearded and unafraid, he stood on an empty whiskey barrel in the glow of a gambling house's open doorway and hurled Scriptural passages at the heads of sinners, who listened until thirsty, then went to bars and, as they swallowed hot liquors, approvingly discussed the preacher. There was no bigotry among San Francisco sinners; they applauded the men of God who denounced them, providing that the denunciation was loud and forceful, befitting their robust sinfulness—worthy of applause.

In the Magnolia rumors and reports rippled through the low-voiced babble. They talked of the fall in lumber, wondering how severely it would affect Col. Nevinson, who had been speculating heavily.

Stevedores, insolent with health and the pride of $20 a day for their work, shouldered richer men from the bar. A few of the Hounds, dandified of dress and impertinent of bearing, swaggered through the crowd, but kept well together, whispering importantly, eying groups, looking for somebody.

It was reported that Monsieur Max had already arranged to enter into partnership with the beautiful Madame Renault, a lady of experience in such matters, to maintain a luxurious establishment that would give the ancient calling of wayward women a social distinction in the city; an establishment that would provide dinners, dances, mask balls.

Another report that created more of a stir was about a strange occurence at the mines. A party of Spanish horsemen, armed to the teeth, had galloped into a camp on the Stanislaus, lined a bar room full of men against the wall, then the Spanish leader had walked slowly down the row of men, examining each face. Evidently he had not found the one for whom he was looking. No violence was done. Nothing was taken. Without a word, the horsemen remounted and, with furious clatter of hoofs, rode off into the night.

This mysterious and bold act had caused some alarm and great excitement at the mines; and news of it stirred wild threats in the conversation of men in the city.

It was incredible, hot-heads said, that greasers should dare fool with Americans; and moreover, said other men, it was contrary to the Constitution of the United States to allow —— foreigners, of whatever color, to dig gold that belonged to Americans. All greasers should be run out of the country, said many men. The Hounds, hearing this wide-spread sentiment, shouted applause.

Bruce Brace, the cadaverous associate of Col. Nevinson, with Jerry Fletcher at his heels, accompanied by other swaggering

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young Hounds, passed restlessly from one part of the Magnolia to another.

Mr. Cronin, the house-manager, was in complete charge. He was dark-eyed, rather short, a bit fat, with a sly agreeable smile, and a friendly word and handshake for anybody. In so democratic a city, the Grand Khan himself, had he owned a saloon and wanted it to prosper, would have had to shake hands and stand treat; for it was here, during these days that the famous but nameless Irishman declared—

"In this country, each man is as good as another, and a —— sight better!"

XVII

THAT evening Don José de Sola and Dick Hales came into the Magnolia together, but José started directly for a monte table. Hales went to the bar.

Bruce Brace and the young swashbucklers with him appeared more or less deliberately to press across the floor so as to meet Jose, and one of the Hounds made a lurch to bum against him; but José was not watching the moon.

Easily and quickly he shifted his feet, and Jerry Fletcher, not coming against the man as he had expected, stumbled and nearly fell.

"What you mean, greaser, pushin' a white man!" cried Tim White, one of the Hounds, but taking care to keep well back by the side of Brace.

"He pushed me!" yelled Fletcher.

The filmy eyes of Bruce Brace had cleared and his drooping body was rigid. His right arm was behind him.

Don José quickly stepped backward, making sure to be beyond the reach of hands that might grab him, and his hand settled at his right hip as he tossed aside a cigaret.

"He pushed me!" squawked Fletcher.

"You, sir, are drunk!" said a powerful voice as the shadow of a big man fell across Fletcher. "Nobody pushed you. If you can't carry your liquor like a gentleman, keep sober, sir!"

Fletcher looked up into the large and now severe face of Judge Deering, and said impertinently—

"You'd better keep out o' this, you had, old Pot-Belly!"

"And you," said Judge Deering's companion, a large man with the beard and dress of a miner, "had better mend your manners, or we'll have Dick Hales give you another hiding!"

"Come on, Jerry. Come on," Tim White whispered, pulling at Fletcher's coat. "This is spoiled. It's the other fellow we're after anyhow."

"We'll get this greaser some other time," another voice buzzed into Fletcher's ear.

They went off, clustering about Bruce Brace.

"Thoroughly ripened gallows fruit!" said Judge Deering, angrily tapping the floor with his cane.

At that moment Don José was staring toward Bruce Brace's back as though he had seen the —— there; and, turning slowly, keeping at some distance, he followed.

Hales had gone near an end of the bar and, more in idleness than thirst, waited until one of the busy bartenders should notice him

His head was full of things that were not pleasant to think about. He had, that afternoon, gone from one low hut and tent and shack, wherever he heard a woman might be; and he had gone, ashamed of what he was looking for, half hopeful that he would not find her.

Hales had learned nothing, except that men and women could live in shabby filth, be slyly wheedling with a glint of wild animal hunger showing through, and drink such poisonous stuff as fairly smoked with acid fumes, and which, when slopped on the rough tables gnawed scars in the wood. They were mostly Chileans, Peruvians, with already a thick sprinkling of Australian convicts, men and women. Camp-followers that hung about the army of gold-hunters. He had been told in a way that was nearly convincing that he would find among these the woman whom he had called his sister.

Among the thoughts that bubbled confusedly in his mind as he waited for the bartender was a curse on the gold that had brought this scourge of people into pastoral California. He knew the fantastic idleness of the proud, generous, happy families, whose unfenced herds of cattle and horses covered the hills; and though the Spaniards had done little work, except from horseback, yet there was laughter and music throughout the land, and nobody went hungry. The father of the wealthiest family might not handle ten pieces of gold in a year, yet had everything that money would buy—hides were the coinage of the country —and much else that was not to be had for

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gold, such as a care-free happiness, troubled at times by prayers to the good God for more rain.

"What will you have, Mr. Hales?" asked the bartender. Hales was now a well-known figure.

"Whisky."

The bartender put down glass and bottle, gave Hales a sidelong glance as if about to speak quickly and quietly, then answered the call of a man who swore that he was half dead of thirst, though from the look of the fellow he was nearly over-weighted with quencher.

Hales poured out a drink and turned the glass slowly in his fingers, watching the oily liquor, colored as if by its own heat.

The bartender grasped the neck of the bottle and, with the other hand wiping the marble slab, said earnestly without looking up—

"Turn 'round! Turn 'round, Mr. Hales!"

"Thanks," said Hales, and glass in hand he faced about, putting his back to the bar.

Not four feet away stood Jerry Fletcher, flushed and eager, by the side of Bruce Brace. Another man was well behind the cadaverous Brace, as if hiding at his back; and two more of the young swaggerers, with a sort of guilty effort at nonchalance, at that moment reached the bar—one on each side of Hales.

Hales knew quicker than thought could have told him that this meant a fight. If he had been halfway watching, instead of moodily cursing the ill-luck of himself and all California, too, he would not have let two men, such as these, get on each side of him, where they could strike or joggle his gun arm.

It was hotly written on Jerry Fletcher's face that he meant to have revenge, and one of Fletcher's hands was in his coat pocket where the very bulge of the cloth disclosed a short-nosed gun.

But the danger, as Hales saw it in an instant's glance, was not from this pretty-boy of a Hound; it was from Bruce Brace, whose head hung forward on his sagging neck, and eyes that were usually dull now had a fixed and meaning stare. But his right hand was behind him. No gun was in sight.

HALES could not step backward for he was against the bar. He knew they meant to kill; and they had come so quietly, arranged themselves so cleverly, that men drinking along the bar were unaware of what was about to happen so near their elbows.

"Well, Fletcher, go ahead!" said Bruce Brace impatiently, but with his eyes fixed on Hales.

"You horse-whipped me yesterday," cried Fletcher in a thin voice that cracked with excitement. "Now——"

Hales tossed the glass of whisky into the eyes of the man that stood at his right side, and as he drew his gun he pushed with his left arm at the man on his other side. Then a spurt of flame darted with a gun's roar from under the left shoulder of Bruce Brace, though no gun was in sight and his hands were behind him. Guns broke loose, as if at the beginning of a battle; simultaneously, from all directions, men appeared to be shooting.

Men, drinking at the bar, leaped and scrambled clear over the bar and crouched behind; others, with frantic shout, plunged for the doorways. They ducked, they fell as if themselves shot; they shoved each other to get to shelter behind columns. They went under tables, into corners, cursing. There was cause for panic. It seemed the shooting would never stop. Bullets flew wildly. Glass from shattered candelabras rattled on the floor and tables.

Bruce Brace, almost the instant he had fired, pitched forward, shot through the back of the head. Jerry Fletcher, wildly pulling at the trigger and trying to dodge went down, dead. Tim White thrust a gun against Hales' side, but Hales shot him. A third Hound took a bullet through his stomach, and clapping his hands there, spun around and around, yelling, then fell to the floor, rolling over and over. A fourth threw away his gun and bolted for the door, leaping, yelling incoherently at every jump; and at him Don José, careless of who might be in the way of his bullets, fired once, twice, and the third time the fellow was caught in mid-air, and dropped with a hurtling flop, as if thrown, and lay like a discarded scarecrow.

The black smoke of the now silenced guns drifted with slow whorling, weaving itself into a transparent, film-like shadow as it rose upward against the low ceiling; and the Magnolia was for a moment quiet as if all were dead.

Hales glanced at the caps on the chamber nipples of his revolver to see how many shots were left for what need he might have, and held the gun at his hip, muzzle up,

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thumb on the hammer, and peered watchfully through the smoke. The menace of his watchfulness kept men quiet and motionless as they waited, expectantly.

Don José slowly thrust his revolver into its holster. A glint of white showed between his lips, almost as if they parted in a smile. He did not move from where he stood, but drew from his pocket a corn husk and tobacco. In an absent minded way he deftly twirled the cigaret as he looked about the floor as if counting. Something of defiance, contempt, satisfaction were mingled in his aloof glance. He put the cigaret between his lips, drew a match along his arm, inhaled deeply and tossed the match aside and, with a bearing of insolent indifference, waited for what might be said by the men who were coming up from behind the bar, out of corners, from under tables, streaming in through the doors.

Voices mingled excitedly. Shootings were common; but this had been like massacre.

"You might've killed all us!" a distant voice shouted reproachfully at José.

"A *greaser*—an' them white men!" some one bawled angrily.

"Where's Nevinson?" The question was like a threat.

Don José slowly blew smoke out of his nose by way of answer.

Judge Deering was among the first to approach Hales. The miner, his companion, looked keenly at Hales who, with a foot, pushed Bruce Brace's left arm aside and fully disclosed a small revolver.

"His hands were behind him," said Hales. "But I *saw* the shot. And there's a gun."

"*Si*," said Don José, with an air of insolence as he came nearer. "His was a clevar treek. So"—Don José drew his own revolver, and some men edged back quickly. This greaser did not appear to care whom he hit. "His arm eet was behind him, so!" Reaching behind him, José thrust the muzzle of his revolver under the pit of his left arm. "I see his gun when he held eet this way an' come toward Señor Hales. I come too, an' wait, señors."

"Ah, justly killed with his own treachery," said Judge Deering, touching Brace's gun with the tip of his cane.

Mr. Cronin, with eyes wide as an owl's, had emerged cautiously from around the end of the bar. His puffy little face was bloodless, and he muttered "Terrible—terrible!" His words were broken with nervous gasps. He stared in timid reproach at Hales and José.

The bodies were hastily lifted, for Cronin was anxious to have them out of the way. They were carried off and placed side by side on the floor under the balcony. There were no police to be called to take charge. There was a sheriff, his name was Pullis; but history has remembered his name only because he was the Steward of the Hounds. No one knew where to find him; and the Hounds, sworn together for mutual protection, to defend the rights and right the wrongs of their members, were showing no eagerness to come and claim the bodies. There was no morgue. There was a graveyard out in the sandhills; and sooner or later they would be put there, clothed as they had fallen, with nothing at head or feet to say who they were or why they had died.

Hales and Don José, after lingering long enough to show that there was no haste about departing, went away together.

Men drank and talked of what had happened. Gamblers began anew their games. A few men began to play. The negro orchestra, still badly shaken, tried to follow Mr. Cronin's urgent command to play, play something lively, but strings were out of tune, fingers unsteady. There was as yet only a whanging and whining of instruments as the darkies tried to tune up.

In the very air there was a kind of impalpable uneasiness, and there were more calls for whisky than for mixed fragrant drinks, because of the chill. Nevinson's name was mentioned often, and the wonder of what would he do. Everybody expected, too, that the Hounds would take revenge somehow. Because of his dress the Hounds spoke of Hales as a greaser; and in bullying, robbing, assaulting wretched Chileans the hoodlums of the city had grown contemptuous of greasers. Bets were made on how long Hales would live. It was reported that the Hounds were threatening to burn the Spanish quarter, as the tents and shacks of the Chileans were called.

"The hour of reckoning draws near, sir," said Judge Deering to whoever cared to listen. "The evil that men do lives after them, but the evil themselves are not long-lived. It is preposterous, sir, that a parcel of cutpurses and rapscallions should virtually terrorize this city, though it is true, very true, that they exercise a well-defined

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caution in regard to just whom they try to terrorize."

"Careful, Judge!" warned a friend anxiously.

"Careful be ——, sir," said the Judge warmly. "Too many of our tongues have been sealed up by that word 'careful'!"

AT THAT moment a tall figure emerged from the outer shadows of the doorway, and with solemn march came to the threshold and stood there. The man's body was gaunt, his face darkly bearded, the sunken eyes blazed; and silence came over the crowd as it turned toward him.

Ezekiel Preble, with a manner of deliberate wrath, paused as if reluctant to cross the threshold of a house dedicated to the worship of Satan,

He raised his left hand aloft, and in his left hand he held an open Bible, its pages spread.

"Repent ye! Repent ye! Repent ye murderers, idolaters, whoremongers, drunkards, or the curse of Lord Goda'mighty cometh upon ye!"

His long right arm made a level sweep in a gesture of accusation.

"Ye spill the blood o' man as a drunkard spills his wine, an' your souls will fry in ever'lastin' hell like bacon rinds in a skillet. I come out o' the wilderness cryin' a warning. Cursed shall thou be, cursed and damned to hell everlastin'. The Lord thy God will make plagues and sores eat ye! The Lord'll make the rain of thy land powder an' dust, from heaven it will come down upon ye! The Lord shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore blotch that can't be healed, from the soles of thy feet to the top of thy head! Murderers, drunkards, worshippers of harlot gold. Repent ye, repent ye, repent ye, for the wrath cometh!"

He stopped. For a time he remained motionless, holding his Bible aloft like an oriflamme of warning. He glared, with the light of wrath in his deep fanatical eyes.

Then he lowered the book, closed it with a slap, and, an arm enfolding it against his breast like a buckler that would ward evil from his heart, he turned and with solemn stride marched through the light-haze of the doorway and vanished into the darkness of the Plaza.

Some one laughed. Another man slapped his thigh and cried, "By ——, that was great!" Others laughed a little uneasily, trying to hide the flush of fear. Others cursed—praising the preacher.

"Magnificent!" said Judge Deering with deep-voiced enthusiasm, as he tapped the bar with the head of his cane to attract attention from the bartender.

There was a propulsive rush for the bar, a clamoring for drinks.

Voice broke into fragments of sentences:

"— an' this mornin' they said he was dyin'!"

"That bacon rind soul o' yourn, Jake, is shore goin' into the devil's skillet. I wonder do they serve beans with bacon rind in hell?"

"You'll shore find out!"

"—an' I give twenty dollars to that old ——"

"It's worth it, pard. He was talkin' right straight to you, givin' you pertickular ——!"

"—yeah, I'm thinkin' as maybe how I'll repent a little. I already got one boil —"

"That's from eatin' too much hog fat. You git some sassyfras tea an' —"

"Talkin' about a rain o' dust, I reckon as how he was shore describin' the wind we got here in this town —"

A man with the flabby jowls and wide mouth of the garrulous, not quite sober at that, fastened a grubby hand on first one and then another, all the while saying earnestly:

"We gotta git that feller a meetin' house. Yeah. An' put him in it. Yeah. Make him stay there. Yeah. Stay there, ——it. If we want to git cussed out we can go to the meetin' house. Yeah. On Sundays. It's proper to feel bad when you go to church. Yeah. But it ain't proper to have gospel in a saloon. Them two ain't conformitous. Preachers is all right y' understand. Yeah. But they shouldn't bother a feller. We gotta git that feller a meetin' house an' put him in it. Yeah. Make him stay —"

XVIII

THE next day was Sunday. The only difference that this made in the life of the city was that a few people here and there gathered together and worshipped God, and more than usual got drunk; but business went on the same; stores were open, saloons crowded, gambling houses packed.

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Ezekiel Preble held two services on the Plaza from the top of a barrel, one in the morning and one in the afternoon; and men whittled and chewed tobacco as they listened, or in low voices discussed their own affairs, moving off toward a bar when they were tired of listening. Preble was a powerful preacher and spoke almost entirely in Biblical phrases; but they were more powerful sinners.

During the morning service two droning voices conversed—

"Nobody 'pears to know just where the colonel's gone, though some was saying yest'day they seen him ridin' off with that there Tesler gal an' her Pa."

"She's right purty they say. I ain't seen her yit."

"Say, did y'ever see a woman you felt like you'd do whatever she wanted if she'd just smile a little?"

"Naw. I ain't never been much of a hand to be a fool over women."

"Well, the colonel he's a right smart hand over women."

"Le' 's get a drink."

"That's a whack!"

AT THE same hour that the Rev. Ezekiel Preble was preaching his morning sermon on the Plaza, Dona Elvira Eton sat in silken *dishabile*, smoking black tobacco and, with a kind of dainty loathing and through narrowed eyes, watched a wretched woman who, with arms on the table before her, writhed about in her chair, rubbing her hands with fumbling vagueness across a dirty tangled head.

She was sobering up. She had been drunk when she came the previous afternoon 'and, though beyond knowing what she was doing or where she was, had clamorously demanded more to drink. There was no talking with her. She appeared quite used to making scenes when she was not given enough to drink; and, being given a bottle of whisky, had soon gone off into snoring slumbers. Now with headache and confused blurred senses, she was coming out of the stupor that was about as near to a blessing as anything she was likely ever to get out of life.

She was a thin woman, young, wasted by sin; the little devils that live in hard liquor had drunk her blood, eaten her bones. She was dirty, in ragged clothes; but, fallen as she was, there remained a glimmer of the personality rather than of good appearance that had once made her a favorite with men.

The good Dona eyed her with disgust, and the faint line of an unconscious sneer lay like a shadow on her own shapely lips. That a woman, any woman, should go so low was beyond Elvira's understanding. But then Elvira had been schooled in sin and its arts from youth; this woman had been plunged into it, falling from a good home.

Elvira felt contempt and physical loathing, but the more miserable this woman, the more miserable she could make Hales.

The drunken woman opened and closed her mouth, licking her lips, making wry faces, as if indeed tasting wormwood. With head half adroop and one eye nearly closed while a hand fumbled through her hair, pulling and rubbing, she turned her gaze doubtfully upon Elvira. The miserable creature was as full of oaths as her body of aches. She stared fixedly at Elvira, then—

"I guess you're real. But what the —— am I doin' here? I want a drink—hair of dog that bit me. Whole —— skin of dog. St. Bernard skin. You ever drunk? Huh?"

"Not really, no."

"No? Uh—do I get that drink?"

"Must you have it?" Elvira inquired uneasily, afraid the woman would have a tantrum if she didn't get it, and soon be unconscious if she did.

"Must is right! An' I don't mean tomorrow. I mean now, right now. Hear me?"

Elvira called Tota from the next room—

"Bring a glass of whisky, Tota."

The woman eyed the negress with a kind of suspicious scrutiny, then shouted—

"Bring the bottle. They don't make glasses big 'nough for me. Not any more. An' be in a hurry or I'll yell."

"You're not going to get drunk again, surely?"

"Ain't I? Huh. Just as fast as I can get there. That's all I been doing for weeks. But say, what am I doin' here, with *you?* How'd I get here?"

"You know me?" asked Elvira, a little surprized.

"Know you? Huh! Yes I know you. Yes. You're Elvira Eton. I used to be pretty, too."

"And your name?" asked Elvira innocently.

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"Raggy-tail Mag. That's me. Life's funny, ain't it? An' I got a head on me—ow, what a head! You've never been tight? Don't you like the stuff?"

"Not much, no. A little wine."

"Bah, wine! I want something you can *taste*. An' you'll get to whisky yet. Oh yes, you will. Wait till you have to make up to ever' lousy tramp that wants a kiss—then's when you've got to get drunk an' stay there. Uh-huh. Where's that nigger wench with my drink?"

Tota came with bottle and whisky glass and, as she was placing them on the table, the woman who called herself Raggy-tail Mag snatched bottle and glass and began trying to fill the glass. The liquor spilled as if the devil himself were tantalizing her by jerking her hand one way and jostling her arm another—her hands were that shaky—while the maddening odor of the spilled whisky increased her desire. With an oath she threw the glass to the floor, and bending her head she opened her mouth savagely, placed her lips around the bottle, raised it with both trembling hands, tipped back her head and gulped.

"That's better," she said, clapping down the bottle, and eying with satisfaction the amount that was left.

"What is your *real* name?" asked Elvira.

"Who wants to know?"

"I shall help you if I can."

"*Help* me? Help *me!* You're a liar. You're up to something. I know women. I'm a woman—used to be one, anyhow. Pretty, too. Ask your colonel."

"*My* colonel?"

The woman laughed derisively.

"Don't play innocence with me. Everybody knows you and him. You're after something. The colonel's *not* a bad fellow. Hones'. Just a man. Don't want a woman 'round him longer than she stays pretty. You'll learn that sometime. Ha-ha-ha! Can't blame a man for that. He's born that way—man is. Of course he'll lie to you, an' play —— with you. But us women do the same. It's a game. Woman loses. But I don't blame the colonel. Not any more. He's no good but I was bad or I wouldn't ever have listened to him. Lord how I loved that man—once. Not any more. You've got me here to learn things about him. But if you think I'm goin' to tell lies about him so you can throw 'em up to him, you're crazy. I'm not. Bah!"

She drank again. The whisky had warmed her tongue.

Elvira peered at her closely, searching her as one woman searches another; and she was surprized, somehow vaguely jealous that this creature should speak well of Col. Nevinson.

"Why do you talk of Col. Nevinson? I haven't mentioned him. Haven't even thought of him," said Elvira.

"You," said the woman indifferently, "are a liar."

Elvira smiled a little. It meant nothing, that "liar;" nothing more than when one player says "check" to the other across a chess board.

"Then tell me about him. He appears to mean so much to you, this colonel."

"Huhn?" The woman eyed the beautiful Dona with hostile scrutiny. "You love him? I'll bet you don't. I did—once. I've loved lots of men—'cept the one I should. Men an' whisky. When I get a whiff of the old corn juice—I'll just take another drink right now." She did—a large drink. Then: "There's nothin' to tell. I met the colonel in Washington. I was a fool over him. When I heard he was comin' to California I got on the boat. I'm tellin' the truth. You don't like it. You want me to lie, don't you? Say he took me away from my husband, don't you? Ruined me, don't you?' I won't. So there! Fooled you."

"But here, after you got here? What happened?"

The woman returned to her whisky bottle, then with pathetic flippancy—

"I tried to make him jealous an' it didn't work. He pitched me out. I felt so bad I got drunk. Been drunk ever since. Be drunk again in about ten minutes. You'll see. Maybe less."

"What's your real name?"

"What the —— do you care?"

"I don't, really; but I am interested. I mean to help you, because I can see that you are a woman of good family. The colonel did tell me of you. You told my negro Sam—he found you—that your name was Anna Hales.

"I must've been drunker than usual. I'm an awful liar when I'm drunk."

"That is your name, isn't it? The colonel said that it was. He feels awfully sorry for you."

"Was, once. But one day I said to myself—right after I run across Hubert Lee. He

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recognized me. Knew me back in the States. I said, 'Look here, Ann. He's dead now, the man whose name you're using. He was always too good for you. So from now on, you're goin' the rest of the way to hell under your own name.' I was Ann May Taylor. May Taylor—Mag Taylor—Ragged Mag, that's me. Ask anybody. Closer I get to hell, better woman I'm getting to be—hee-hee-hee! Funny, ain't it?"

"Where is *he* now?"

"Dead. Killed in the war, thank God. Though at that I guess he knows what I am now. Uh! Hope not."

"Are you sure?"

"Sure of what?"

"That he is dead."

"Yes I'm sure. What you talkin' about him for anyhow? My ——, we're not fit to mention his name. He was a gentleman, —— you!"

She began to weep and at the same time to try to drink from the mouth of the bottle.

Elvira was stirred by discordant impulses. She felt an impulse to throw the woman out, forget her; but there was another impulse, which she hardly understood, made her feel a sort of pain.

For the moment her sympathy dominated.

"Listen to me, Anna. I —"

"Mag, I told you."

"I own a little place out in the country. An old Spanish rancho. How would you like to go there, to rest?"

"What're you up to?"

"You need rest, good food. Clothes."

"You're up to something?"

"I swear I am not. I heard of you, how miserable you were. I wanted to see you. You may go out there if you like."

"Any men? I don't want to see men?"

"Only servants and the man Ferdinand I have in charge. If he's there now. He goes back and forth to the mines."

"Why are you so good?" asked Anna.

"I think it terrible that a woman such as you should have had such luck."

Anna stared. She said, "Oh, Oh, Oh!" in broken sounds of pain; then with a rush arose and dropped at Elvira's feet seizing the silk of Elvira's skirt, burying her face in it.

"I will be good—take me out of hell. I swear to! Whisky—I won't touch it—I swear—oh, you—*are* an angel—Oh!"

"Don't! Don't!" said Elvira quickly, startled, pulling at her skirt, shrinking. "Don't be a fool!—I mean foolish —"

But the woman did not notice; she was weeping in a kind of hysteria, so full of pain and hope that it seemed repentance.

XIX

AT ABOUT this same hour, José de Sola, with the wary idleness of a man who, though he knows that every shadow may hide an enemy, is too proud to be afraid, sat on the portico of the Parker House.

Dick Hales had spoken with José, half urging the young Spaniard to join with him.

"An officer I used to know has been at me," said Hales. "The Army has received word from the East that so many emigrant trains are starting late, and so badly equipped that a lot of them are going to be caught this fall in the mountains. Scouts are going into the mountains to meet these trains and help them through. How about going with them?"

Don José shook his head, smiling faintly, then with deliberate enunciation—

"Why, señor, should it be that I help these emigrant people into my country. I do not like Americanos."

"Trains are full of women and children."

"*Our* women are insulted. Our children have their fathers robbed, killed—whipped!"

"Anyhow," said Hales, "I think I'll ride through the mines. Shall we go together?"

"An' deeg gold?" said José contemptuously in English.

"No, no. That is not why I'll go, if I do go. I've heard so much about the mines that I would like to see them."

"Señor Hales, you are my friend, *caballero*. It would be a pleasure to go with you. But I go to the mines, today, tomorrow, the next day—I do not know when. But some day soon I go to bear a gift of the de Solas to some—" the words came through clenched teeth— "Americano gentlemen!"

"Don José, it's not for me to tell *you* what honor requires. But be —— sure you kill the right men!"

"Kill? Ah no, señor. A dead horse does not feel the branding iron. They will live, those men, till God gives them blessing. But the gift of the de Solas will remain with them to the grave. *Mediante Dios!*"

TO BE CONTINUED

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FORT GARRY GOES FIRST

by Hubert Kelley

Being an account in rhyme of the last glorious charge of the Fort Garry Horse of Winnipeg, Canada. Most of the troopers, I believe, were Americans.

The Garry men spent their last night with my regiment late in November, 1917. They struck for Cambrai at dawn. The tanks followed and broke through the pontoon bridge over the Nord Canal near Fins, Somme, France, preventing the British troops from following the attack and, of course, sealing Fort Garry in enemy land. About forty of the three hundred Garry troopers got to Cambrai. Some of the forty got back by swimming the Canal.—HUBERT KELLEY.

GIVE tanks to mechanics for two-penny panics—
The crawlers, the turtles, muck-sloppy and gory—
But horses will carry the men of Fort Garry!
Give horses to heroes to charge down to glory!

The coveted walls of Cambrai town were twenty miles away.
"For the British King," swore the high Lord Byng, "we'll take that town to-day.
We'll cross the bridge and smite the ridge and scatter their paltry force.
But who shall go first on the pontoon bridge—the tanks, or the Garry horse?"

"We'll follow no tanks to battle, thanks," quoth the colonel of Garry men.
"My lads go forth to battle alone and alone they go forth again.
And we shall go first and the tanks be accursed! Will you give us the first attack?
And we shall ride down to Cambrai town if never a man comes back!"

Lord Byng was moved and he bade them ride, and they clattered away in the dawn.
God help the bristling enemy line Fort Garry charged upon!
Red sabers flashed as Garry slashed, slashed and galloped along,
Galloped and scattered the bristling line, galloped three hundred strong.

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They charged and they thrust and they reddened the dust with their blood and the blood of the foe.

And blond heads were cleft as they cut right and left, and the German line broke to the blow.

But, "All is not done till Cambrai be won!" the colonel cried as he fell.

"Oh, you must ride down to Cambrai town or you must ride down to hell!"

Give trenchmen a rifle, a ping-ponging trifle;

The bomber a bomb and the high lord a pen.

But the men of Fort Garry know cut, thrust and parry!

Give sabers to Garry! Give sabers to men!

They slashed to the open road and dashed with blood and foam in their track,

And one of the riders was not a man, but a corpse with a bloody back.

Gallop on! Gallop on, till the last man be gone! Who can stay these galloping men?

Oh, they will ride down to Cambrai town or never ride home again!

Forty rode down to Cambrai town; the rest of them rode to doom.

Forty alone in the enemy land! Hark, hear the cannon boom!

Halt! Do you hear? It comes from the rear. Black night is shuddering down.

And Byng still back where he launched his attack and Garry in Cambrai town!

The high Lord Byng had failed to bring his troops through the breach of the ridge,

For his battering tanks had crashed through the planks of the tottering pontoon bridge.

The breach was sealed and the British reeled with the foe on the ridge's crown,

And the Garry band through the enemy land came riding from Cambrai town.

Brave chargers will carry the men of Fort Garry!

They will cut through again; they will swim to the shore.

Give tanks to mechanics for two-penny panics.

Give horses to heroes for glory and war!

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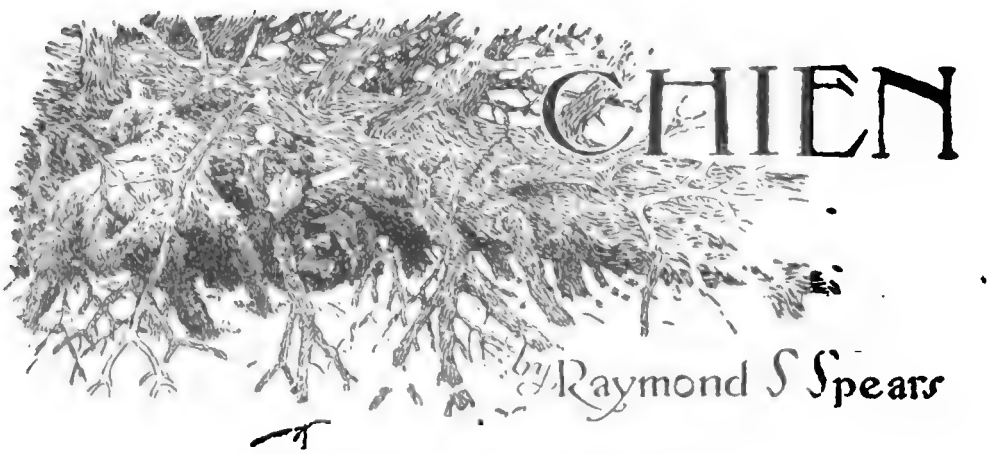

Author of "Fines and Fees," "Willie alias Bill," etc.

FRENCH LOUEY walked down the steep, stony slope from the railroad to the Port Coldwell harbor where his squat, wide and seaworthy little old sailboat rested at ease against the fish-dock landing. As he stood by the boat, considering if he was at last really ready to go down the East Shore to Oiseaux where he was going to trap that winter, he heard a mingled squeal and howl of agony. With a start, he jumped to turn like a rabbit in mid-air.

He saw, on the rugged slope, five or six boys attacking a grisly dog which had the gaunt but rugged frame of a good sled huskie, and the shrinking helpless bearing of a mongrel cur. The brute would weigh nearly seventy pounds, but his head was pointed, fox-like and timid—the craven timidity of a spiritless pariah. French Louey snorted with disgust.

"Hi-i-i!" he cried. "Quit dat! Leave dat dog alone— What d'—— yo' don' plague a dog dat bite back, eh? —— such a t'ing! W'at fun to poun' a dog dat a fool lak dat?"

The boys scattered like young grouse. The dog, his tail between his legs, his tiny head drawn down, and between his abject tail and his abject head a frame worthy of a better spirit, shivered and rolled his eyes about watching the boys scatter and the wonder of a man who had driven his tormenters away. French Louey looked at him. He had never seen that brute before. He knew all the dogs of Port Coldwell, but this was not one of them.

"—— tramp!" French Louey grumbled, "I bet—I bet by gar you was kicked out somebody's sled team! Yes, I bet so—Chien —— Chien! Dog—pouf! Why don't you eat one kid up, an' run-n to the nex' town, eh?"

As he scolded, the dog crept nearer, abjectly, rolling his eyes, and wagging his tail with gratitude. Perhaps no man had ever before spoken in that commiserating tone of voice to the dog, or perhaps the words were reminiscent of happier days. The dog came watching French Louey's moccasined foot and watching his grimacing face.

The trapper returned the stare. Since when had a dog come to him as to majesty? Not in forty years had he owned a dog. He needed none in his wilderness craft. Dwelling alone in the green timber he stood against the woods creatures, living on their furs. He knew a few bluejays by their names, and chickerees; he might even spare a porcupine that came to his camps, because their grunting and gnawing in the night relieved the feeling of aloneness. Now the dog came cringing, grateful because of the protection from cruel human brats who did not know it was cowardly to abuse a weaker creature.

French Louey gazed with utter contempt on the dog for a minute. The dog shriveled about the face and his rat tail hooked up in utter abjection and humility, but that broad back, the wide chest, and sturdy hips could never be deprived of its look of natural strength and endurance. The very lift of

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each paw shooting forward along the ground was full of power and strength.

"By gar!" French Louey grumbled, "eef it wa'n't fo' dat haid an' tail, yo' be'n a —— good dog for somebody!"

A note of admiration crept into the man's voice. This dog was a wonder, different from any dog he had ever seen before, and as he spoke the tail swept out behind, the little head lifted and the brute's pose was in keeping with his body. A kind of light came into his eyes and he gazed square into the trapper's face, studying the wrinkled and grizzled countenance with something like equality, as though he would walk with him.

"Hi-i!" the trapper laughed in delight. "I bet you be a —— good dog, in some particular—yeh!"

The tail wagged, and the dog's forefeet left the ground as he trembled with eagerness and desire to understand, showing his appreciation at the caressing timbre of the woodsman's voice.

"A beeg dog afraid!" French Louey shook his head. "Well, mebby it ain't so bad as a leetle dog dat's too —— spunky, sometimes. I don't know. I ha' my doubts. W'at! You come wit' me? I didn' say so! Well, eef yo' be scairt down by Oiseaux yo' can run t'irty mile to de railroad, an' nine hunder miles to Toronto, or Ottawa—yah! An' every jump a nervous one!"

Two species of wilderness creatures excited the unbounded interest of French Louey, the pekan, or fisher, which knows no fear, and the wolf which has only the courage of the pack and of hunger. The pekan and wolf look their parts in wilderness life. Perhaps the trapper saw, unconsciously, the craven wolf spirit of the dog in head and tail, and the sturdy strength and burliness of the pekan in his supple, muscular body. The man laughed when the dog with a long, light leap sprang to the deck of the sailboat, and landed on legs that took up the shock so lightly that the craft hardly quivered, and no sound of his fall could be heard—a wonderful thing!

"Hi-i!" French Louey nodded, with approval, "he whistle, he whine, but he is a still dog—Chien! Chien!"

So he named the dog Chien, or Dog. Casting off the line by which the boat swung, the trapper poled clear with a yellow spruce sapling twenty feet long and no larger than a cane fish pole. He ran the triangular sail up and stretched it. He puffed his lips and blew a loud breath into the spreading sheet; on the instant a faint zephyr struck him on the back of his black creviced neck, so that the boom lifted gently, the sheets drew taut and a feel of motion ran through the craft as with barely noticeable heel she gathered way and headed slowly down the fiord that was split through the massy ridge of stone into the open Lake Superior beyond Pic Island.

French Louey seized the tiller and looking alow and aloft, glancing over his shoulder astern and peering, blinking, through the narrow way ahead, watched his navigation till, with a sigh, he cleared into the open water and a lake-wind took firm hold of his sail, heeled him well over, and rolled a good bone in the jaws.

"Hi-i!" he grinned, "Chien! Yo' brang good luck, eh? I no have to pole an' row dis boat in dat harbor, eh? W'at yo' tink, now?"

He gazed thoughtfully at the dog, which under his attention wagged his tail and lifted fox-ears and with jaws and tongue, fairly slobbering, walked along the lee rail, outside the splash board, and aft to the stern where the steersman could take a handful of hair on the shaggy breadths of his shoulders, in caressing attention.

"By gar, Chien!" the man remarked, " 'tain't de firs' time you be'n in a boat —no-o! Prob'ly in canoe, too, an' skiff. I bet you live on fish boat an' mebby steamboat. Reg'lar tramp, yeh! I tell yo', but you can't eat more 'an twict as much as I do—no! Moose meat, an' prob'ly pat'ridge an' rabbit. More likely, yo' eat poison-wolf pills, de firs' chance yo' get, too. Den good-by dawg! Yes, poison pills are good-by wolfs and dogs! But w'at yo' good for?"

He talked all the way across the rocking, leaden sea pointing down to Oiseaux Bay where he would have his main cabin that winter. He watched the southwest with frequent glance, sometimes with a long disapproving stare. The wind, good enough in its way, was out of the southwest. A dark bank of low blue clouds rested down there at the horizon. He knew from long experience that any moment those clouds might lift, and beneath them come a whitening spread of wave tops, whipped up by a gale which might last merely an hour or two, a squall, or for thirty days steadily, a gale of unceasing roar and danger.

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But the sailboat, after hours, after all that day, as a bit of white canvas in the midst of vast waters, swung through the open into beautiful Oiseaux, having held a course as straight as a survey line, and then tacked to the northeast and with fluttering wing drew up alongside a natural pier where French Louey made fast bow and stern.

He looked ashore, where the last leaves of autumn were fluttering down, showers of yellow and red under the second growth poplars; a few young maples, and scattering of briers, ferns and up-springing evergreens. Out of the southwest shone the setting sun, level rayed for a time over that unresting sea, white and chill with the approach of the sharp night.

"Yeh!" French Louey begrudged the scene its due, "Yeh! Nice an' bright now—Hi-i! To-morrow, mebby, or next day come the wind—blimme-e-e! Cold an' rain, snow, sleet, for ten days! Yeh—I know dis —— ol' sunshine, I do. Eh, Chien? Eh-what!"

THE dog, too, had landed. He was sitting up, with his absurd fox-head held high, his absurd rat-tail wrapped around in front of his enormous paws, and his eyes looking far away, as if he was seeing the secret places of the wilderness that at the bay edge was burning, coming into second growth, and beyond the virgin green timber that fought for roothold, on the red granite and the quartzes of that ancient glacier range of stone.

French Louey crouched, with his hands on his knees, looking at the dog. The brute paid no attention to him now. Chien was seeing things, the man knew, with eyes and more than eyes, by light of sunshine and by other light, as well. The man of the wilderness felt cold chills along his back, as he saw the dog's entrancement. He knew the look in the animal's eyes, making them wonderful and strange like the inscrutable expression when a dog dreams and its eyes are half open, half closed, seeing not with light but with mind. Cold chills chased one another up and down French Louey's back.

"*Sacre!*" he whispered, "*Parbleau*—W'at's dis, now, eh? W'at you see, Chien? Eh, somet'ing out der, eh?"

His voice was caressing, full of perturbation and understanding, too. Chien, aroused by the questions, blinked, seemed to come back from his reverie and then turned to look the man squarely in the eyes. The tenseness of muscles flexed and the dreaminess of expression relaxed. Chien's nose twitched, his set jaws parted, and a half-smile wreathed up at the corners of his mouth. Then, with a sudden gulp, a closing of his lips, and a sticking out and drawing in of his red tongue, he apologized to French Louey for having gone into that abstraction.

He ducked his head and came cringing contritely for the caress and tender curses that the man showered upon him.

"Ah, yo' scoundrel!" the trapper said, "yo' don' fool me, not a bit! All dat duckin' an' lickin' yer jaws, an' whimpering—yah! Yo' don't fool me— Now, Dog, tell me, w'at yo' see out der, eh? W'at mysteries in dem big woods?"

The dog rolled his eyes as French Louey clasped the head between his shapely, if dark and weathered hands, taking the ears with fond grip. The dog smiled. Perhaps it had been years, perhaps no one had ever been so kind and attentive to him before. Chien smiled and looked into French Louey's face not merely without fear, but with more than gratitude, with undemonstrative happiness and contentment—with understanding, not only of French Louey but with more than that, for as the man's grasp relaxed, the dog looked again across the bay, at the wilderness, and through it to something that the man knew was there.

"By gar, Chien!" the trapper said, in a low voice, "W'at yo' see, old boy? I wish I knew w'at yo' see, now——"

Again the dog was lost in his oblivion. He was seeing, perhaps, something beyond the ken of the man. Then the man was glad he had befriended the brute, saving him from the boys who would grow old before they would understand. Perhaps they never would understand the mysteries that a dog may know, but not men. French Louey wondered at the dog's prescience. For two score years he had neglected dogs, despised them, jeered the owners of dogs and now a dog had come to him as though to be protected.

"Hi-i!" French Louey grimaced. "Ain' dat funny! By gar, he act afraid—an' scare me cold down my back knowing so much!"

Suddenly, the man sprang to work. He rushed a tent to the level shore, stretched it

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between two trees, staked it off to low shrubs, and built a fire on the level gravel. He carried a frying pan and handful of potatoes in a pail to put them on a grid, and with one motion did three or four things. The eagerness of the dog suddenly caught his attention, and reaching he caught up his .22 caliber bait rifle, pulled the trombone and with quick aim pressed the trigger. A great northern hare which was fifty yards away under a clump of low ground spruce leaped from its bed, ran a dozen stricken jumps and then fell inert from midair—shot through the heart.

The dog raced at the shot, and brought back the victim, held by the nape of the neck, the long hind legs dragging. At this French Louey froze, staring with open mouth, surprized.

"W'at!" he cried, "by gar, bring um in—retriever! Hi-i! An' yo' let brats tie cans on your tail, and act like a mongrel dog—Bah-h! I bet yo' fool somebody yet, mebby!"

He shook his fist at the dog, and pranced up and down. He declared by the night-walking gods of the wilderness that no dog would fool him—no! He knew dogs too well for that, having owned some, when he was a foolish boy, and worked, and slaved, and spent his winters catching meat for them to eat, and summers fishing for them, and never having any time to do anything for himself.

"I stunted myse'f, feedin' sled teams an' runnin' to break trail for them!" he grumbled. "An' now I am old an' foolish, like a kid, I let a dog bum in on me, to eat all my grub up! By gar, nex' I know I be cookin' for him. Here! Eat dat!"

Scornfully, he stripped the rabbit, and gratefully the dog ate what the man tossed him. The long, slim, smoking carcass was hung over the tent ridge rope to cool. Bacon, potatoes, and tea all came ready at once. The man drew a tray slyly from his outfit, put a plate, knife, fork, spoon, cup, slices of bread, butter and even a cube of store-cake on it, watching the dog out of the corner of his eye.

"All right!" the trapper breathed to himself. "See me all stylish like this, and a tin table to eat off of, he don' say a word. By gar! I mak a fool of myse'f—a dog for comp'ny, an' a tin tray for comfort. I know I am old, now! Nevaire before I so foolish, but now!"

He shrugged his shoulders contemptuously. The dog drew nearer to the efficiently built bit of fire. He was content. He had not eaten all the rabbit waste. The man did not fail to notice the meager appetite.

"Some dogs eat their weight every day!" he grumbled. "May be this boy he eat sensible, not so much. I like dat, leave a bit——"

He grinned as he wiped out the last stain of grease on his aluminum plate, and drained his cup to the utmost drop.

"All right, Chien!" he nodded. "I let yo' be de polite feller!"

Night fell, and the chill night wind whispered in the dry weeds, over the fallen leaves and brought the low thunder of the waves as they crashed against the perpendicular walls of the East Shore. In haste French Louey heaped up driftwood cast on the bay shore in tons and cords. He fed the cooking fire coals with chips and sticks. He rolled up a dozen heavy timbers, skidded them up on sidewalls of old pulp, and soon the flames were writhing up among the crevices of the stacked wood. French Louey crept back into his canvas lean-to, and the dog came sneaking, cringing in, doubtful of his reception.

"By gar!" the man grumbled, moving over to give the hulking brute room, "I bet I don' let any dog crowd me all around, will I, Chien?"

The dog raised his eyes and looked meditatively at the man, blinked, sucked his tongue in and out contritely, and then gazed through the fire into the far-beyond. The man stirred uneasily. What was the brute seeing now, in the dark? Why did he look like a noble creature in these times of abstraction, while in other conscious hours he was dejected, abject, cringing and apologetic? French Louey shook his head.

"I don' know dogs!" he said. "I wonder—eh— What?"

The dog's hair was bristling along his back. The fine eyes were flaring and gazing into the gloom of the green timber night. For minutes he sat there rigid and defiant, stirred perhaps by some noble indignation. Then, just when the man was ready to pounce up and down, and seize a rifle in one hand, a knife in the other, expecting no less than a pack of silent hunting wolves, or a golden bear of tradition, or a mad moose, the dog relaxed, turned around tentatively,

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curled down and, with a doubtful sidelong glance at the man, with a dozen showings of his tongue tip, settled into the plumb comfort of shelter, fire and companionship. After a blink or two, with a sigh, Chien went to sleep breathing deeply and regularly.

French Louey swore under his breath as he spread his great green blanket on a square of waterproof canvas, very careful not to disturb the dog's rest, and rolled up in it to go to sleep. He, too, breathed in a deep sigh, relaxed, and as easily as the dog slipped across dreamland into the depths of slumber.

IN THE morning the man was up at false dawn. Sharp frost was in the air, gloom was over the land; and the beginning of his winter trapping was at hand. He started a fire, fried bacon, made flapjacks, sharing even with the dog, who won the man's heart further by eating with delicate gusto, biting off small chunks of flapjacks and eating them, holding down the cake with his paw to take each mouthful. He ate only half as many as the man, and contentedly ground up rabbit bones and ribs as the man bit off the most of the meat, and handed the rest to the animal—who soon had all he wanted.

"Dat's de way to eat!" the trapper declared. "A fine dog! By gar—yes!"

When true dawn was come, French Louey pranced back to a clump of tall, slender spruces, where he felled enough to make him a main cabin eight by ten feet square, and six feet high. He logged them off, and notched them with incredible rapidity, for his one-man cross-cut saw was sharp and his ax was keen. He cribbed them up without measure, except by his true eye. He poled the slopes of the roof, and by night he was back at the tent, grumbling at the shortness of the days.

All day long Chien had walked up and down, in and out of sight. Sometimes he was going about on bent legs and licking in his tongue, his tail curled under as though he questioned the privileges that were now his. Again, when in the distance, French Louey saw the brute straighten up, hold his head like a proud and blooded bird dog, erect, and walk with long strides and swagger swing.

"Two dogs in one!" French Louey remarked to himself. "One afraid and one dat don' care a ——! I wonder which is bigges' in heem?"

The season left little time for the man to speculate on the nature of the companion who had imposed on him—as the trapper swore. The rush of the trap line was at hand. He finished his main cabin, hauled out his sailboat on rollers with a Spanish windlass, cached his supplies temporarily and then circled back into the wilderness, running light, to prospect for fur and determine the course of his trap lines through the green timber.

He knew the lay of the land, having trapped it during other seasons. Out of Oiseaux he struck old trails that he had blazed in other years. He went down to Twin Falls River, followed up Swallow River, and even went up to the crest of the stone ridge whence he could look down on Puckaso River basin. His eyes missed nothing in that looping course which led him up and nearly twenty-five miles a day, seeking the range of the fur bearers, and inspecting old cabins that he had built in previous years, rooting out his caches of traps, camp outfits, and even ammunition which he had stored there against this return.

With him went Chien. Sometimes the dog would follow at his heels, cringing along, looking doubtfully into the recesses of the dark shade that was under the green timber and at other times would stroll forth in swaggering carelessness. At night, when French Louey camped down where darkness overtook him, the dog would lie by the fire with eyes looking into the fire, his little jaws resting on his enormous legs. Sometimes the dog would walk out to the edge of the firelit circle, and sitting down, half close his eyes and look—look so long and obliviously that French Louey would grow nervous, the cold chills coursing to the points of his shoulder blades, and the mockery of the wilderness spirit would make him wince.

During forty long winters he had lived alone in the green timber, one of the living creatures of the wilds, sharing perils of storms, accident and privation. In that time he had grown sensitive to the moods of the wilderness, knew the meaning of the winds, of the bird cries, and of the voices of the running creatures; he believed, too, that other things were in that land than what he could see, and the attitude of the dog

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confirmed him in his visions. He could only suspect their presence, feel them passing in the gloom, hear them whispering afar, and perhaps see them faintly when the fire was down and silence enabled him to see, half-dreaming, that another or others were by the smoldering ends of his wood. Chien, more and more, confirmed him in his idea that long before men would know of things to come, the creatures knew. It made the trapper shiver when he saw the dog staring at him with fixed meditation.

"*Parbleau!*" Tell me w'at it is!" he would cry out, and the dog would, perhaps, cringe and whip his tongue in apology—perhaps come walking gravely up to take a caress.

"I am old!" the trapper muttered to himself, sometimes, apprehension drawing down his exuberant spirits, as he looked ahead, questioning the mysteries of life. The coming of the dog was more strange than the loneliness of the woods. He wondered what was the portent of that?

"Another dog, an' I kick him into the lake!" French Louey lied to himself. "But I let him live, come wit' me—an' I feed him!"

The truth was, no dog had in all those years imposed itself on him. He had never missed their companionship. Now he wondered at the break in the routine of his life. He knew in his soul that it must mean something. A thousand times, as the dog clung to his heels while he strode along the trails, reblazing them, or from cubby to cubby to put down traps, or while he circled in rabbit swamps shooting bait, or skirted around pools catching trout for smoking or to make fish oil.

A strain of bird dog in the brute's mongrel ancestry made a retriever and pointer of him. He turned his nose up wind, and French Louey learned quickly to pay attention to this sign, and killed not only the two young moose that he needed for jerked venison, but three black bears as well. He saw that the dog acted differently toward these commonplace animals than he did toward the things that drew his attention at dusk, or midnight. All the difference in the world lay between the fresh track of a wolf, and the voice that was no more than a voice riding in the night wind. Toward tangible things Chien maintained a dubious, questioning, even shrinking attitude of curiosity and exposition. Fearful of the flesh and blood creatures, of the moods of a man most of all, Chien bore himself with dignity and pride if the spirits of the wilderness were abroad—French Louey could see this!

Accordingly the man looked over his shoulder, and watched his step. He double-wrapped his wolf poisons. He sheathed his ax-blade, and carried his gun with care. Never did he make better snowshoes than those he strung this autumn with caribou thongs. He set his deadfalls for black bear with circumspection, and kept his back from under the long poles that would break a bruin's back at a tap when the trigger-pan was stepped upon.

"No!" the trapper shook his head, "I take no chances!"

WHEN the first snow fell, he was ready for the beginning of the trapping season. One day he shot a marten, and found the skin just coming prime and white. On the run he sallied over his long trap line, putting baits into the cubbies, cut up porcupines, quartered rabbits, fish crow and fish chunk, head of moose or scent-baits. Of the bears he killed he used none of the meat. Few creatures, except in the extremes of starvation, would eat bruin meat.

Presto! And his trap lines were ready for the winter work. In each one of the trap cubbies was bait and a steel trap, covered with a few sprays of evergreen twigs lying flat, and behind the trigger pans were chunks of tempting flesh. All had been leading up to this, the trip down the lake shore, the building of the cabins, the blazing of the trails, the building of the trap cubbies, the killing or catching of the bait—and every trap was placed where mink or marten, lynx or pekan, otter or wolf, bear or fox was fain to walk.

By little things the trapper knew that he was right. A wolf would stroll along the sand beach of a lake, close to the woods; a lynx would walk along the foot of a ledge of rocks; a mink would follow a stream, a marten the back of a ridge; otter follow long runways on streams and across lakes, turning aside at brooks to wade up through the shallow water—and here a trap in the stream bottom would fool the sliest water animal; and the otter's cousin, the pekan, would circle a hundred miles, taking in the slopes of broken stone on the sides of rock ridges; fox would use paths around clearings and along shores of ponds—every

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animal had its own characteristics and whims. French Louey had his, too, and one of these was to watch Chien, the dog, who clung steadfastly at the trapper's heels till the man knew in his heart the brute was guarding him, but from what he could not tell.

French Louey had condescended to accept the company of the dog in the beginning. Now he would end the day of a long tramp along a line talking to the wise-eyed dog, begging, asking, demanding, pleading for information on the ideas that were in the animal's head. With blinking, unswerving gaze, Chien would tolerate the attentions of the man, even remaining awake if the trapper were insistent. But why tell a human something he would not or could not understand?

The first snow went away in a sleety thaw, and other snows came. Then a storm blew up. Lake craft no longer came down the center of the lake, but hugged along the shores, ready to run into bay or harbor at the first wild blow of wind. Then their smoke vanished. One day the tender came by, and picked up the lighthouse keepers from their headlands and their island points. On the lake shores settled the grim hold of winter. The giant seas rose at the brink of the land, and then hurled themselves against the heights of stone. The spray that fell rattled and clattered down the faces of precipices in crystals of ice, and for seventy feet above the surface the high stones were draped and hung with folds and sheets; with columns and masses of corrugated ice that gave back the white sunshine on a fair day in flames of blue and green; in frozen fire of red and purple till the wonderland of the shore was ablaze with the glory of crystals and gems.

Chien and French Louey, on a headland, watched the shore on such a day of wintry sunshine. Far as they could see the crystals gleamed. The man thrilled to the spectacle; the dog sat erect, with half-closed eyes, also seeing; by chance they had come out of the dark green timber to look—and then they scrambled down into the cabin by Oiseaux, the bay of birds.

"*Sacre!*" the trapper grumbled. "I forget when dis is, if it is Christmas or New Year's! Well, I never did remember, anyhow. I don't care. I better watch the weather sign! Come the January thaw—den I mus' be ready!"

Luck was with him. He shot a black fox with his .22 caliber bait rifle, at twenty rods. He caught his record of pekan, twenty-nine. Mink and marten were plenty, and this was his great year, when out of the experience and wisdom of his life he found and took advantage of the greatest fur pocket he had ever known. He carried the furs in to his main cabin by Oiseaux, but the white- and salmon-colored canoe-birch bark tepis out on the line, and the three tiny log cabins held for him the adventure and satisfaction of his winter. At Oiseaux he was "back home" where the sun shone in the open of the old burning, but in the small one-man, one-bunk cabins and wigwams he now was in the turmoil and satisfaction of his good fortune—but not alone. With him was the joy of a comrade; Chien walked with him, sat with him, stood by him and lived by his fires.

Chickadees would drop down on Chien's back, and the dog would look over first one shoulder, then over the other, and then at French Louey in bewildered, comical protest—yet not so much as shaking his back or crinkling his backbone. One late day, the trapper heard a bluejack screaming in wild indignation and, when he looked out, saw that the bird was holding a shred of meat on one end of a rabbit skin, and the dog was holding the other end, the bird in a fury of resentment, the dog shamed and yet unwilling to give up—as though his small head were not large enough to cope with that impudent free-booter of the wilderness. Even chickadees, having made the acquaintance of this over-bodied, under-headed dog would take a short cut over his back, leaving their tracks in the frost on his heavy jacket of fur.

The man and dog were threescore miles from Oiseaux in the ridges far beyond Iron mountain. They left the Three-Bay lake at dawn, the dog hanging back with a bit of whimpering, as though he hated the early start. French Louey cursed him, jeering him. The dog often was reluctant to move. They followed the line for miles, and French Louey began to storm angrily at the weather. He was sweating, the snow was chilly, and the branch ends dripped on his neck. He was an old woodsman, but he missed the significance of this sudden change in the weather. Perhaps the chill sweat of stored up frost in the snow fooled him. At mid-day a sudden gust of wind whipped

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through the tree tops. Warm breaths of air swirled about him. He ate his lunch, peering at the low clouds. He looked at his dog, and saw the solemn eyes of the animal looking at him, through him—seeing other things.

"*Sacre!*" French Louey whispered. "W'at's it?"

Rain began to fall. It began to pour down, warm and fresh like a summer shower. With a shriek, French Louey sprang to his feet and began to run. The January thaw! He must hurry!

The snow beneath the surface was still crystaline and hard, but the top was like dough, which collected on the hoops and web of the snow-shoes. French Louey realized then his negligence. He had not watched the weather! He cut a stick two feet long, and every step he took he struck his snow-shoes sharply, and the snow was broken loose. He hurried breathlessly to make the miles to his next camp, a log cabin where he could wait the passing of the thaw.

The rain became a downpour. It weighted the cling-snow on the trees, and avalanches slipped down the branches, and slides started on the steep slopes of the rock ledges along which the trapper had set his lynx traps. He found two lynx caught, but paused merely to rap them on the necks and toss their carcasses into his pack. Soon their weight bent him and he hung them over a spruce tree branch, close up to the trunk.

The rain washed down through the snow, and the bottom went out of it. The snow-shoes sank deeper with each step. Suddenly, he slumped through fairly to the ground more than four feet down. He scrambled up, started on again, and then went down through again. He scrambled again, and in six steps he was on his hands and knees again, and he stopped, steaming and fuming in the storm.

Behind him walked the broad-pawed Chien, making no sound, his head bowed and a mist rising from his fur. The dog stopped when the trapper fell, and waited patiently.

"*Sacre!*" French Louey cried, looking around. "Caught out in the thaw! A-aha-ah—ugh!"

No worse place could have been found. On the level was a wide, open marsh, or rather soft swamp with scattering, half-drowned trees. A steep slope, less than perpendicular, of stone on which a few stark spruce trees grew was on the north. Here he had no protection from the storm, and almost nothing from which to make a shelter.

Sullenly, the trapper looked back along his trail, and then circled the landscape. He turned and gazed at Chien who did not meet his stare, turning the back of his head instead. A shiver of apprehension and dread caught the old man's flesh and bones. A mile ahead was a thicket of spruce knolls. That mile would wear him down, but he must fight it to the timber shelter, where he could build a shack of shingled up boughs, make a fire and wait for the inevitable freeze—he shivered at the thought of the cold which would follow this storm.

He bucked the wall of snow that encompassed him. He could not walk on it, nor could he wade through it. He simply had to plow and struggle into it. He grew breathless. He weakened. He became so weary that he could not lift his foot till he had waited for the aches in his knees to subside and the choking in his lungs to ease. The dog walked behind, step by step, his head hanging and not once looking the man in the eyes.

A NEW terror gripped French Louey's heart. How long would he be hungry? When could he go on to the camp, where a scant five miles distant were ample supplies for an emergency? Thought of hunger still further weakened the old trapper—anything but starving! He looked at the dog—Chien, too, would be hungry!

Sweat of effort, and of fatigue gathered over the man's eyes, and filled them. His eyesight grew dim. He would have left his pack, but for the things it contained which he must have. He regretted the lynx he had hung up, for they were white, good meat. He fought steadily ahead, till exhausted when he must wait to gather strength again. He was fighting for each step at last. A gloom settled down with the rain. He wiped his eyes to look around. He could hardly lift his arms to clear his vision of sweat! Rain beat on his cold face.

Night was at hand. He was astonished to see that he had reached the edge of the spruce woods. He took heart from the fact, made a score of lunges, bucking the pulp snow, and saw a white birch tree

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ahead, hanging with draperies of shredded bark. He reached it. With trembling fingers he pulled down an armful of the stuff, and out of his match box took a splinter, husbanded it in the shelter of his own body, dried the box with friction, struck the match and slipped the flame into the mass of curls. For a half minute they smoked, writhed, twisted, and then burst up into flames.

He broke dead branches from a spruce and stacked them upon the bark. They too sizzled and steamed, but they were sound and dry under the scaled skin and began to flare up. The heat revived him. He fought the snow for a dead stub the size of his arm, and laid it on the fire. He was desperate. He was tired out; but somehow he piled up the dead wood and at last crouched, with a cover of canoe-bark over his shoulders, hovering by the fire. By and by he dragged something to eat out of his pack, a fist of jerk, and bite for bite, shared it with the dog.

Chien smoked in the warm rain. He stood with bowed head, staring into the fire. He looked sidelong at the trapper, but did not meet his gaze. French Louey would have cursed, but the epithets choked in his throat. On him was the curse of the wilderness—caught out in the January thaw! Little to eat, nothing for shelter, and the snow impassable!

"The last time happen, I was young!" the man thought. "In three days I made five mile—now I am old. Now my heart fails me. Comes the change, and the freeze—br-r-r-r!"

It was four miles to camp. The rain might last a week; it might take the snow down to knee depth; it might starve him to death—he did not know. No man can know what the January thaw will do to him! French Louey felt the storm slacken, and the rain became a drizzling mist, warm, steaming and full of clammy zephyrs.

Chien turned and walked back in the trench French Louey had plowed in the snow and the man dozed into utterly weary sleep. He drew himself up into a tighter jacknife fold. The birch bark wrapped him closer and protected him where he huddled.

Something crackled, something splintered, something broke and the dog gave a sharp howl of alarm. French Louey started up half awake, partly conscious. He heard the world crashing and the skies fell down upon him as his mind went back into the darkness again.

Sometime after day came again French Louey returned to consciousness. When he tried to move he found himself pinned by arms and body and legs. He could see daylight, but his vision was slow in clearing. He opened his eyes with difficulty. He finally made out what had happened.

The thaw had loosened the fibers of an old spruce tree. The weight of rain-wet snow in the top had born it over. The trunk had crumbled, and now the branches were jammed down around him, on all sides, and he was pinned fast where he had sat huddled before his fire.

Water dripped along the up-thrust branches, ran around the knotty trunk and then flowed down on the prongs that stuck in the ground on all sides. A fork was over the man's neck, and held his knees together. He could feel another branch that held him from behind. A bent branch pinned his right arm to his side, and his left arm beneath him crowded between his side and the ground. He was trapped by a fallen tree.

"*Sacre!*" he whispered. "Mon Dieu!"

He could not move his legs. He could just move the fingers of his right hand. He felt the weight of the tree on his back and neck. He could turn his head only an inch.

"A dead-fall for Ol' French Louey!" he whispered.

He was numb, but did not ache. He could hear the dripping of the trees, smell the melting snow and the escaping balsam. In his throat was thirst that tasted old and like deadwood.

He tried to find some way of slipping, or sliding, or thrusting out of this trap. He was slow to admit that he could not escape from the grasp of those spiked-down branches, broken in the earth and forked over and around him; caging him immovably where he had huddled, dead tired. He wondered if some one would come along and rescue him? No one ever came through that wilderness in winter.

He could roll his eyes, and turn his head a scant half-inch. Then terror filled his heart. This was no way for a man to die! French Louey couldn't die like this—no! By the saints it couldn't be! He strained and stiffened his back, his arms, thrust with his legs—and gained not a hair's breadth in any direction. That tall spruce tree weighed

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hundreds of pounds, and the broken branch ends were spiled deep in the ground.

"I am not hurt!" he whispered, wetting his lips, as he felt the blood coursing warmly through his arteries. "Just stunned!"

Stunned, but overcoming that! Even his weariness of the snow-buck had seemed overcome. The numbness gave way to the rush of blood. He could feel the branches that pinned him there. Then he felt the cold water that was coming on the branches and dripping through his woolens to his warm skin.

"*Sacre!*" he whispered, "I must get out!"

Trapped, imprisoned, helpless—he could not move to help himself! Waves of fear intermingled with waves of hope. A trickle of water ran down through his cap, down his face, through his whiskers into the corner of his mouth. He felt the drops with gratitude. He licked them in one by one. For a long time he thus drank, and his thirst was assuaged by the blessed dripping. He strained and struggled helplessly again.

Near-by he heard a low whimper, a whine that was eager and questioning.

"Chien! Chien!" he cried out, suddenly remembering the dog. "Chien!"

The dog came struggling and twisting through the crisp and splintered branches. He thrust his little head among the dangling spruce twigs. He looked into French Louey's eyes, wonderingly.

"Chien! Chien!" the trapper gasped. "I'm stuck! Sic 'em, old boy! Sic 'em!"

Chien drew back and pranced, looked around. Rabbits? Pa'tridge? What did this man want? French Louey heard him in the new-fallen top.

"Heah, boy! Heah, boy!" the pinned man said, and worked his hand, clawing at the ground and snow with his few free fingers.

The dog heard or saw the hand and charged down in as though he thought it might be a wolf, but reaching through, licked the hand tentatively. French Louey almost seized the animal's jaw, but restrained himself in time. Instead, he said:

"Sic 'em, boy! Sic 'em!"

He felt the dog pull something, and cried out:

"Thataway! Sic 'em! Parbleau—Chien! Bite 'em!"

The dog took hold and gave a tentative wrench and twist. Something crackled, and the trapper felt the sprung limb that pinned his right arm give. He thrust from his shoulder and the elbow bones slid past the bough that had held it and he could swing his forearm. The dog began to dig. He began to bite into the tangle of twigs and splintered branches. He ate into them with his little jaws, and then set back, when he had a mouth full, with all the might of his broad shoulders and sturdy legs. He tore away the side of the cage-trap that held the man.

"Eat 'em up!" the man cried, sudden hope illuminating his despair, "Bite 'em —tear 'em! Good dog, Chien! *Sacre!* Ah-h-h!"

As he lived, French Louey fought for life. With one arm partly free he bethought himself of his knife, the short, thick, stocky blade that meant so much in skinning furs or cutting meat, splintering kindlings or cutting new snowshoe strings. He twisted and writhed, wormed his fingers back and bent his wrist till the bones slid and crackled. He felt the handle, and he slipped the button that held the strap around the top, to keep the knife from falling out. He grew tired of his work. He grew breathless. He had to cease his efforts, to rest. The dog came in, pulling at the branches and twigs, breaking them away. He knew, that dog, that the peril of the man was great!

HOURS went by. The light that was greatest at noon folded into increasing gloom as night approached. In the darkness the trapper continued what the dog's teeth and pawing had begun. He won to the handle of the knife. He succeeded in grasping it. He managed at last to twist his arm till he could pry the blade out of its sheath. He sighed at last with contentment as, weary and a-sweat, he brought his right hand forward again with the knife in it.

In the darkness he felt around. Over his shoulder was a limb that pinned his head and neck. Around on this left side was a branch that held his left arm and hand as in a vise. Overhead was the tree trunk-itself, several inches in diameter, crowding him down with its weight.

Stroke by stroke, with almost no purchase and with the little strength he could bring to bear on the keen edge of the blade, he whittled at the branch which pinned his right shoulder, wedging him in against the

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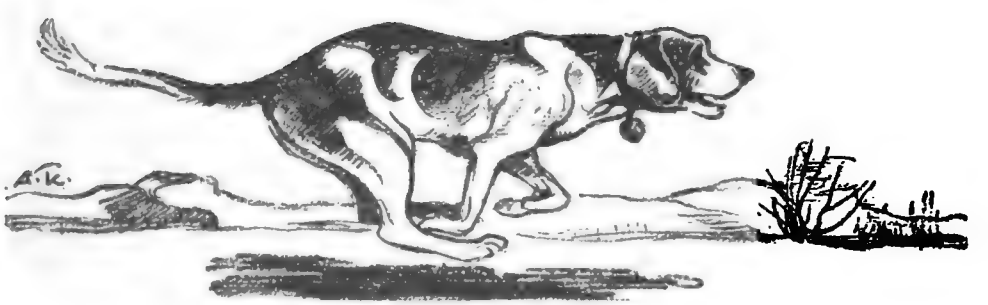
tree trunk. He pulled away the tree-bark, and he felt the tiny whittlings, like chickatee cone-shuckings that litter the wilderness, fall past his neck, or on it. The dog came in, dug and bit and pulled, then retreated and crouched panting from its work and doubt. The knife fell from the man's numbed fingers, and he managed to find it only with difficulty; he grew weary beyond endurance and dozed into sleep that was a nightmare. Dawn found him still hacking away slowly, and thus he worked through that hard, tough wood till, without warning, it suddenly straightened and broke away.

French Louey sagged over on the ground where the dog's digging had dug deep. The change in position sent a thousand piercing agonies through his muscles thus suddenly strained or cramped. He writhed there for a time, the dog coming to nose him. He found that he could turn, that he could crawl, that he could pull his way out by the hole from under the tree top.

"*Sacre!*" he whispered, reaching into the leather pack and taking out all that remained of the venison jerk. He shared more than even with the dog. As they both gnawed at the tough, but nourishing meat, the man started another fire. He could hardly move. He struggled to stand up, and he struggled to drag up sticks of wood—but the flames warmed him. He laughed at the sudden chill that followed a clatter of sleety rain in the woods. In ten minutes the rain was sifting snow flakes. In an hour the snow was crusted. By mid-afternoon French Louey strapped on his snowshoes and staggered along over the newly formed crust on his way to camp.

The distance was four miles. In three hours he arrived at the cabin. At his heels walked Chien, head down, with blinking eyes and apologetic manner, as though he wondered whether he could enter that doorway. The trapper pulled down two frozen rabbits and gave them to the dog, patting him on the head. Then the man cooked himself a hot stew for supper. He gave the dog, already surfeited, half of this.

"*Sacre!*" French Louey shook his head. "Now I know what for you come in the woods, on my line this winter! Hi-i! But it's all right; I don't hold it up against you, not telling me in the beginning."



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STAND TO HORSE

Fairfax Downey

Author of "Heads in a Noose," "To Beat the Band," etc.

LIEUTENANT FERDINAND JONES, Field Artillery, was suffering the consequences of having routed a stable sergeant out for reveille. Not even a world war justified that. Now as he dragged himself on toward the stable through the sunshine of Virginia, the whole harrowing scene flashed back through his mind.

As painfully green as unripe apples taken internally, he had made the mistake of trying to cover it up by super-activity. Hearing sincere snores proceeding from a tent two minutes before assembly, he had thrust open the flap and commanded:

"Turn out there. Reveille's blown. Snap out of it!"

No answer from the heap of blankets. No obedience, unless you consider the lieutenant's command had included, "Cease snoring."

"'Snap out of it,' I said."

"Aw, go to ——."

"Here! This is an officer speaking."

Stable Sergeant Mike McRuddy was an old soldier. But this was the limit. He had suffered much in this war army that was so new it squeaked. So the heap of blankets responded very sleepily and sorely—

"Well, this is a stable sergeant sleeping."

"Makes no difference. Out with you and into line."

"Sir, does the lieutenant know I was up four times last night with a sick horse?"

"That's an old one. Line up or be reported to the colonel."

So Mike McRuddy, his Irish so far up it broke an altitude record, had had to rush his small bristling body into his uniform and fall in. The amusement of the battery at the spectacle had spread through the regiment much to the anger of the butt. And Jones had soon become aware of the enormity of his violation of army tradition. Good stable sergeants should not be required to do anything—but be good stable sergeants.

Shuddering at the memory of the scene, the lieutenant passed the gun park with a longing look and entered a long low stable building over the door of which was the legend, "Battery B." It seemed to blur before his eyes into "All hope abandon, ye who enter here."

Grooming already was in progress. In two long rows of stalls the battery's horses were undergoing the systematic back-scratching, dusting, massaging and pedicuring which the army rigorously prescribes. Some of the nags did not seem half to appreciate the attention they were getting. To put it mildly, they fidgeted. Some laid back their ears in a most malicious manner; others snorted and gave dirty looks with the whites of their eyes. The soldiers doing the grooming—most of them recruits with which a skeleton regular army outfit had been brought to war strength—were as a rule nervous about their task. Only the farm boys among them were entirely at their ease. Supervising, the veteran

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non-coms moved about among the men of their sections. Lieutenant Jones entered, young, sturdy but not eager.

Presiding over it all stood the small but formidable figure of Stable Sergeant McRuddy. He bristled with vengefulness. The three chevrons over a horse head, the insignia of his rank, seemed fairly to champ out from each arm at the newcomer, on whom he bent such a black-browed look as is given a tardy and inept pupil reaching school. The recipient quailed visibly and forgot to answer a casual salute.

"Everything all right, Sergeant?" he inquired apprehensively.

"As right as it can be with them boneracks the Remount wished on us," the stable sergeant sniffed.

"I meant comparatively," the lieutenant hedged. "Well, let's feed 'em up and do the best we can."

"With what particular—sor?"

"Oh, the usual ration and—" the words of the bugle call ran through the lieutenant's head: "And give your poor horses some hay and some corn," and he added, "try some corn."

"Since when are we bein' issued corn?" There was a leer on the sergeant's face. The officer caught it.

"I was only joking," he put in quickly and hastily walked away.

Now Second Lieutenant Ferdinand Jones was almost as ignorant of horses as he was of ostriches; more, they struck terror in his bosom. He wished to Heaven they were one and all tractors. His only consolation in the field artillery was the guns, and the ranking lieutenant in the battery had been assigned to their care, as the usage is. As the next in rank, Jones got the horses and there was nothing to do but bluff it through. Colonel McCaskey had threatened that any officer, greenness notwithstanding, who failed to hold down his job was due for transfer to the home guard before the regiment sailed. The colonel spoke like a first primer since the occasion when an officer had given the alibi that he had not understood an order the colonel gave.

"This, gent-le-men, is war," the C. O. had declared slowly. "I will not tol-er-ate ignor-ance as an ex-cuse."

So Lieutenant Jones bluffed and, due to rare luck, got away with it.

He walked down the aisle inspecting the grooming, wishing the ordeal over. Any moment some one might ask him something. Horrors! Here came a recruit now.

"Please, sir," begged the recruit, almost tearfully, "I can't make this horse lift up his back foot."

"Use a little force, man," the lieutenant advised gruffly, though his heart bled for the youth.

"Please show me how, sir," the recruit pleaded.

Here was a fix. Probably the beast kicked or tried to sit in your lap when you picked up one foot, Jones reflected. Still he must try. He felt the eyes of the stable sergeant boring into his back. He advanced gingerly.

Then, in the nick of time, came Stable Orderly Farris to his rescue. Farris was a good looking, intelligent young soldier who knew horses.

"Don't bother the lieutenant!" Farris said. "Here, like this."

He spoke to the horse and patted him on the haunch, gradually sliding his hand down to the fetlock. Then with the pressure of his shoulder he threw the horse's weight off that foot and raised it easily for cleaning.

Saved! Jones sighed with relief and Stable Sergeant McRuddy moved off, obviously disappointed. But he was not to be balked. He returned to the attack. A vindictive strain seemed to urge him to bring about the downfall of the tyro officer. In a loud, coldly calculating voice, he remarked—

"Here's a case of what I'd call thrush, lieutenant."

Thrush? Thrush? The brain of Lieutenant Ferdinand Jones spun in an agony of effort. He'd thought it was a bird. Obviously it was something horses had, though. Thrushes sang, didn't they? And—he racked his brain for a hint from "The Care of the Horse"—and thrush had something to do with frogs. Ah! Undoubtedly a frog in the throat.

"Hm. Has the horse seemed at all hoarse lately, Sergeant?" the lieutenant inquired solicitously. "Er—that is, have you happened to hear him—er—neigh?"

An hour later, the unfortunate Jones had learned that thrush is a disease of the frog or horny pad in the center of the sole of a horse's foot. The knowledge came too late, for what might classically be called the blatt had driven the unhappy officer from the stable.

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II

THE black cloud was found to assay a silver lining. Rumors of the debacle reached the ears of the battery commander who relieved Jones from Department B which has charge of the horses. Though not daring to confess to the bluff he had been throwing in matters equine, the lieutenant accepted gun duty with great joy.

But the vengeance of Stable Sergeant Mike McRuddy had not had its fill. What had passed was only short rations. Those who think of the vendetta as peculiarly Italian fail to reckon with the sensibilities of the Celt. Thus entered upon the stage, as instrument of revenge, that mouse-colored charger widely known as Nemmy, short for Nemesis.

Nemmy was one of the worst atrocities the Remount Service ever inflicted on an outfit. The eagle eyes in the wise and wizened face of Stable Sergeant McRuddy singled him out in the draft of horses that brought the regiment up to war strength and he claimed him at once for purposes of sweet revenge.

The outward semblance of Nemmy was not such bad news. The steed stood high—sixteen hands—and he was structurally stout. But the way he showed the white of the eye that wasn't wall, the irritable switching of his tail and the room the other horses gave him were storm signs to the initiate.

No sooner was Nemmy on the Battery B picket line than McRuddy made occasion to remark casually to the battery commander:

"Here's a good mount for Lieutenant Jones, sor. It's a heavy man he is and the horse he has is too light and slow."

"All right," that officer agreed. "I'll assign him."

So it happened that the striker of Lieutenant Ferdy Jones led up for mounted drill that afternoon a strange and awesome beast in place of the docile nag that had previously served.

"There's a good new mount for you, Mr. Jones," the B. C. called over.

Nothing could be done about it then. Catching the glance of the lurking McRuddy, Ferdy knew that retribution was on the way and coming fast. Would that furious little Irishman never forgive and forget?

"Stand to horse," came the command to the battery.

As one man, the battery did. No, not as one man. As all but one man. Nemmy wouldn't be stood to. When his rider tried to assume a military position at his side, the charger sidled around. With a stern hold on the bridle, the lieutenant shifted too. They went around and around. It began to look like a merry-go-round.

"Sure, he's trying to catch the brass ring," McRuddy remarked audibly from the picket line.

"Mount."

Up swung drivers and cannoneers. For Ferdy, easier said than done. Nemmy nipped at him playfully and smote him with his tail, the while he absolutely refused to be scaled. The battery rolled off. When Jones got the creature cornered against the side of the stable, Nemmy coyly leaned hard against the man on his near side. At last Jones vaulted into the saddle and they were off.

They certainly were off. They flew past the battery. At the drill field, Jones got him turned around and they passed the battery just as fast in the opposite direction. After three more such passages, they arranged to drill with the battery. in the lieutenant's ears was ringing a cry he could have sworn he heard the stable sergeant give the last time he had hurtled up to the picket lines— "Try puttin' him in reverse, sor!"

Goaded into desperation, Jones at last had put the spurs to his mount during the drill maneuvers, and Nemmy, after turning his head and giving his rider a look of pained surprize, had become peaceful. It worked so well that fifteen minutes later when the charger showed signs of unrest, the lieutenant scratched enthusiastically again.

From behind him came a stern and awful voice.

"Young man," Colonel McCaskey rumbled, "they're are bet-ter ways of mana-ging a horse than digg-ing spurs into him. Spur him a-ga-in and you are re-lieved!"

Then Nemmy bolted. The battery was ordered in forthwith by the colonel.

Excitement ran through the ranks like wildfire. What was up? Was something doing at last, were they off for France? Or was this just another one of those outbuilding rumors?

No, it was. It was the real thing! Orders came through thick and fast. Entrainment

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for personnel. Guns to be left—new ones over there. Horses?

No one in all the —th Field Artillery asked that last question more anxiously than Lieut. Ferdy Jones. His brain throbbed with hopes and fears. Perhaps the horses would be left behind, too, and new mounts would be obtained in France where men—and possibly horses—are proverbially polite. Perhaps, if they took the nags with them, there might come a Heaven-sent opportunity to push that mouse-colored monster overboard. Perhaps the horses might sail on another boat and be torpedoed, all hands and hoofs being rescued, Lieutenant Jones patriotically hoped, except Nemmy.

The orders realized the third case—in part, and Ferdy Jones breathed easier for a spell.

But only for a brief space. The figurative bomb burst when Captain Leonard of Battery "B" assembled his officers for assignment of the details in the sailing orders.

"JONES, you'll have to take our horse detail," he said. "Sorry, but Hall here is transferred to the staff. You'll be all right, though. Sergeant McRuddy will be along and save you any trouble."

The miserable Jones could only gasp. Fate had soaked him below the belt. Through his buzzing head kept running the phrase, "Lost at sea. Lost at sea."

Through the black encircling gloom, he could only discern one tiny ray of brightness. Maybe McRuddy and Nemmy, too, would get very seasick.

And then there was Farris, the stable orderly. That friendly and helpful young man might be his salvation in some measure.

"How about Farris?" Jones asked.

"—— shame," the B. C. grumbled. "Got to lose him. He's had an application in for a commission for some time. Just got it. Glad for his sake. Good man."

The sturdy frame of Lieutenant Jones sagged woefully. Without some one was heard whistling cheerily, "It's a Long Way To Tipperary." Unnecessarily cheerily, even in the event of the sailing orders. Surely it was McRuddy.

"Sunk without a trace," moaned the unhappy Jones.

But the attention of the others was on a headquarters orderly who had just entered.

"This is fair enough," the battery commander grinned. "Jones, you go with us after all. Farris is assigned back to us as a second loot. Of course, he's the logical man for the horse detail."

A bugler blew "Stables" out of tune.

To Ferdy Jones just then it sounded like the music of the heavenly choir.

III

THE swirl of events which followed saw the —th Field Artillery in France and rushing through a brief period of training. There was no time for more than a brief one. The critical days of October, 1918, were at hand and outfits were badly needed to pinch-hit in the line.

"Gentlemen," Captain Leonard of Battery "B" declared to his officers, "as soon as that slow freight of a cattle boat gets across with our plugs, we're off for the front."

The heart of Lieut. Ferdy Jones, accompanying others, rose up, though with a tempered joy. Nemmy would be coming.

Next day a train pulled into the training base. But it was all *hommes* and no *chevaux*. The horse details rejoined their batteries but never a horse.

"They took 'em all away from us, sir," Farris explained to the B. C. "Sorry. Got almost all the nags across in good shape. They said we'd be issued new mounts nearer at hand. Probably never see our own."

"——uva note," swore Captain Leonard. "That's the army for you."

But the spirit of Lieutenant Jones sang a pæan of joy with variations. Farewell, a long farewell to Nemmy, that fiend in horse's form.

Again the swift swirl of events. The regiment entrained for the front via a remount depot where trained horses, previously shipped across, would be given them.

Detrainment. A rush for the corral. A battle royal between the battery commanders, seconded by stable sergeants, to obtain the best allotment of horses for the outfit of each.

"Recognize any of our old plugs in this bunch?" Captain Leonard inquired of his trusty assistant.

"No, sor," Mike McRuddy replied disappointedly. "But wait!"

The little Irishman dived into a fighting group of horses on one line.

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"My ch'ice, my ch'ice!" he fairly screeched. "I chooses this here gray for 'B' battery!"

He returned capering, leading his prize, a lofty, mouse-colored charger.

"It's Lieutenant Jones's horse, sor," he rejoiced, his eyes twinkling with sinister delight.

It was indeed Nemmy. By an odd quirk of fate—if it was that—the steed had come on through to the remount depot from the port in advance of all his mates. Probably he had been shoved into the last car of a departing train soon after he had debarked.

The reunion between Nemmy and Ferdy was a touching sight. At least it seemed to touch Sergeant McRuddy.

"It's in luck you are, sor," he chuckled diabolically to his victim when the meeting took place at the picket line. "Not another soul in the regiment got back his old mount, savin' the Colonel, and he's all for ridin' in his autymobile."

Jones quailed under the gaze of the wall off-eye of Nemmy. Horses seldom give signs of recognition and perhaps the signs that Nemesis gave were not such. But they were clearly signs of antipathy. He snorted, curled back his upper lip and made a gesture of contempt with his tail.

Many deeds of heroism went unrewarded by a medal in the Great War. Of such was the mounting up of Lieutenant Jones on Nemmy when the regiment pulled out the next morning, for the poor young man was terrified. Nothing untoward befell, however. Nemmy was not himself. It had been a tough voyage across and he had been seasick.

By slow, short marches the regiment proceeded. Strong as was the need of haste, Colonel McCaskey was too old a campaigner to wear down soft horses. The fighting was opening up farther ahead in the Argonne, and apparently the trench staff was through for a time. One of the prime characteristics of field artillery is mobility. The old colonel having come far for a scrap was not going to break down on the fringe of one.

Condition the horses—spare them as much as possible. Those were the strict orders. None was more zealous in carrying them out than Lieutenant Ferdinand Jones. His energy and enthusiasm became a byword. He seemed never to be mounted. His horse was always led, while he encouraged the men, cannoneers and drivers, by trudging along the column with them. Occasionally he would offer his mount to a footsore cannoneer, but the brave fellow would look up, then pull himself together, refuse with thanks and drag himself on.

The implacable McRuddy rode along the column of Battery B, watching the adjustment of collars, seeing that saddle blankets did not slip back. He loved horses, did the little Irish stable sergeant. If he loved anything better it was an enemy. Therefore his most triumphant discovery of the march was not a piece of harness galling a trusty wheel horse, but the spectacle of Lieut. Ferdinand Jones seated at the roadside, dragging off a muddy boot to bind up a raw heel.

Poor Jones meekly suffered the leer he drew. Having once violated the sanctity of a stable sergeant's slumbers and been officious, he was determined to eat humble pie until forgiven. He did not know that an Irishman forgives easiest the enemy who fights back best.

So went the hike until a November day when Colonel McCaskey, charging up and down the column of the regiment in his automobile, ordered all moderation be forgotten and the horses pushed to the limit to bring the regiment to the front. To the ears of the old man had come a most disquieting rumor. It contained a hint of an impending truce. Thunderation! The war was about to die on him while he was still out of range.

The rumor spread. Drivers leaned forward in their saddles, horses strained their traces into taut lines, cannoneers, lightening the carriages of their weight and themselves of equipment, trotted alongside tugging at the wheel spokes in rough spots of the road. Lieutenant Jones mounted Nemmy, who stepped along friskily.

And so the —th Field Artillery plunged through the devastation of the Argonne Forest, and the next morning unlimbered and went into action with all twenty-four guns, swelling the roaring symphony of sound about them.

Colonel McCaskey, now horsed instead of limousined, trotted up to the observation post where Captain Leonard of Battery "B" was directing fire, assisted by Lieut. Ferdy Jones, the latter mounted on Nemmy, being about to ride back to the battery position. In the colonel's pocket were orders which confirmed that rumor of a truce—cease firing at 11 A. M. until further orders. That

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he transmitted privately to Captain Leonard.

With the men of the B. C. detail stood Stable Sergeant McRuddy glowering. "To see the fun," as he put it, he had left his place at the horse lines and joined the detail. He had no business there. And the worm had turned at last and told him so—the worm being none other than Lieutenant Jones.

"Well, we have fired at least," the colonel growled distinctly. "But think of never getting closer to the real front than two miles before"— the colonel ended in a burst of fancy cussing.

Then that old warrior grinned philosophically.

"For half a cent, I'd ride up," he chuckled and jokingly spurred his horse in the direction of the rattle of machine guns.

Colonel McCaskey wheeled back, but the mounted man who had dashed out after his lead did not. A mouse-colored projectile with a clinging rider sped down a shelled road straight for the front lines. It was Nemmy—and Ferdy.

Stable Sergeant Mike McRuddy watched them go, aghast. He nursed his right hand which stung from a blow on a horse's haunch. And he whispered to himself contritely—

"Hivven rest his soul!"

Artillery fire seemed to be swelling to a crescendo. So did the stuttering of the machine guns and irregular, distant plop of the rifles.

DOWN the road tore Nemmy, the bit in his teeth, a vise which clamped beyond redemption even by the most frantic tugging of strong arms of a desperate man. The charger's neck was outstretched, his nostrils distended, his tail given like a banner to the breezes. As for Jones, he stuck to his saddle like a leech and whip-sawed on the reins for dear life. Despairing ideas of letting go and letting this unmanageable monster float out from under him ran through his head. But like the usual uncertain rider on a runaway he was "frozen" on.

Now they were in infantry territory. After he had gone hurtling past the first grinning group of doughboys, tugging and gasping, up within the bosom of Lieutenant Ferdinand Jones rose the pride of the artillery. With magnificent abandon, he ceased his struggle against the iron jaw of the mouse-colored momentum beneath him. He gritted his teeth and stuck out his chin against his helmet strap. Left hand grasping the reins, right resting carelessly on his pistol holster, he thundered on.

"It's the Light Brigade!" shouted somebody from a company in support, scattered by onrushing horse and rider. "The —— —— cavalry's gittin' in the war at last!"

Whining, zipping things passed, also going fast, but in the opposite direction. Perhaps Nemmy thought they were bees. Anyway, he accelerated. But Ferdy knew 'em for bullets, rifle and machine gun bullets. An artilleryman really ought not to recognize them, but they forced an introduction on Ferdy.

As the express catapulted through the advance units, cries floated in fragments to the wind-filtered ears of the dashing lieutenant.

"Hey! What the ——!"

"And Sheridan twenty miles away!"

"Turn around, you fool, you're——"

"That's Germany out there!"

"Stop him! Stop!"

Out into a stretch of open country, they went at a breakneck gallop. Nemmy was puffing hard but never slackening. Those bees were buzzing around more busily. Must be near the hive. From the parched lips of Lieutenant Ferdinand Jones, the rushing wind snatched a last prayer.

And then in mid-career, in the very center of that open space between the American and the German lines, something smote Ferdy and Nemmy with stunning force and suddenness.

It was that terrific, cataclysmic silence of 11 A. M., November 11, 1918—Armistice Day.

Nemmy faltered in his stride. His ears wigwagged back and forth and finally set, one forward, one to the rear. Ferdy pulled him in front of a mound from which protruded the ugly snout of a machine gun.

Lieutenant Jones, Field Artillery, wheeled his mount and rode calmly back to his own lines. A German machine-gun crew, hands in the air, followed in his train.

"Just in time to see the end of the war," Lieutenant Jones grinned as he rejoined his excited battery commander. "And now, sir, I'd like to report that I have this horse thoroughly tamed. It is safe to assign him as a mount for the stable sergeant."

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RABBIT TRACKS

By Charles P. Mueller

A COTTON-TAIL rabbit "struts his stuff", in a stubble field. About him grasshoppers jump in wild confusion, awed by his gigantic stature and the thunderous thumps of his padded paws. Then, as a passing cloud hovers above and casts a moving shadow near him—he scampers away with such speed that his tracks can hardly be seen in the soft sand——

Frank Scruggs stood in the cow lot, a broken wagon spoke gripped tightly in his hand. Around his fat waist hung a heavy leather belt, dotted with cartridges and sagging at the side that held a big, pearl-handled forty-five.

At his feet, writhing and mumbling, lay an aged, unarmed and underfed Mexican herder with blood oozing from a wound over the temple.

He was a brave man, this Scruggs—with old Mexicans.

"You'd try to gyp me, would you?" he sputtered between curses. "You'll tell me how much I owe you, will you—you dirty low-lifed *pelado!*"

The Mexican rolled over slowly, his hand patting the bleeding bruise on his head. He came to his knees and Scruggs kicked him.

"Get up from there, and get out! You're fired. Savvy? Beat it! Vamoose!"

Feebly the herder gestured remonstrance as he came heavily to his feet; but Scruggs seized his shoulder and spun him toward the gate. He kicked him again, and the Mexican stumbled away, muttering. Scruggs watched him, amused, and showed his yellow teeth in an ill-timed smile. Then he turned to the ranch-house.

As he came around the corner of the barn he saw a horse tied to the hitching rack, and his eyes went quickly to the figure sitting on the gallery steps. Scruggs stopped short. His lips twitched peculiarly. It was an effort for him to get his voice under control before he called—

"Who's that?"

Bud Loman, Scruggs' neighbor on the east, looked up from whittling and answered pleasantly:

" 'Lo, Pancho. I been waitin' for you. Heard you down at the pen but reckoned that was a family matter."

Scruggs was reassured. His lips were straight again, almost firm, as he walked up and shook Bud's hand.

"What's up, Bud?" he asked. "I ain't seen you in some time."

"Nothin' much," said Bud. "Just dropped over to ask you if you'd seen anybody ridin' over toward my water hole last night?"

Scruggs frowned thoughtfully.

"Why no," he said, "no, I don't believe I did. Why?"

"Somebody watered some stuff there last night and tore down a piece of the fence."

"No!" said Scruggs incredulously. "Busted the fence?"

"Yes," laconically.

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Scruggs stared off into the distance. He seemed to be trying to remember. Suddenly he turned.

"Bud," he said, hesitatingly at first, "you know I hate to say it, but from the way that little cuss Ralston has been talkin' lately, it wouldn't surprize me none if he done that."

"What do you mean—talkin'?" said Bud quickly.

"Well, he's been kinder talkin' like he wasn't awful fond of you, you know. He told me the other day—aw well, it don't do no good to talk about it, I guess."

Bud did not insist at once. He was gazing at the corral, thinking of Ralston, and the muscles of his face tightened. He thought of a small, meek appearing man with a tired look and deep-set eyes. A man who had come, from no one knew where, with a smile on his lips and a hacking cough in his chest. He had bought the ranch that bordered both Scruggs and Loman's and now he was insisting that his purchase included the Devil's Water Hole, a natural dirt tank that Bud had always claimed as his own.

Gentle, kind, friendly, that was Ralston, yet still insistent about the tank. Even after Bud had hired a surveyor to come out and prove differently Ralston was not convinced. Even after he learned from talkative neighbors that Bud Loman's temper had already caused him to kill several men with whom he had differed in opinion, Ralston did not hesitate to argue. Bud was thinking of this now. He turned suddenly to Scruggs.

"Well, what'd he say?"

"Aw, nothin' much." Scruggs tried to appear evasive. Bud insisted.

"Well, he hinted like he thought you'd paid that surveyor to fake the line, an' he said that when the thing came up in court next month he'd get the tank sure."

"He will, will he?" from Bud meaningly.

"An' then he said that in the meantime he was goin' to water his stuff there regular. Said he didn't think you'd try to stop him. An' then he said—" Scruggs stopped. He seemed reluctant to continue. He was acting well.

"What else'd he say?" from Bud quickly.

"Well," Scruggs went on hesitatingly, "I don't want to start no trouble Bud, but—well, he said he wasn't afraid of no gun-totin' murderer—meanin' you Bud—an' if there was any trouble started he'd sure see that it was finished right."

Bud made no comment. A half smile crossed his lips for a second, then disappeared. Scruggs watched him closely. After a few perfunctory remarks about some dipping that ought to be done, Bud arose to go. Scruggs followed him to his horse.

"Bud," he whispered, "you ain't aimin' to start no trouble are you? You know I wouldn't have told you if I thought——"

"Listen," Bud interrupted, "you wouldn't let that sneakin' little runt say that about you, would you?"

"'Course not," said Scruggs earnestly. "But——"

"Well, then," said Bud slowly, and turned his horse down the lane.

FRANK SCRUGGS entered the house well pleased. He thought of what would happen to Ralston when Bud should meet him. He had never liked that little runt anyhow, ever since he had approached Scruggs in behalf of some Mexicans who claimed he owed them money. What business was it of his? A Mexican is only a Mexican and nobody ought to kick if you got a little work out of them without paying—leastways a white man oughtn't. Meddlesome busybody. He should have whipped him for it. He guessed he would have if there had been much more said. Again he smiled at the coming meeting with Bud.

Scruggs walked into the kitchen and with a string of curses ordered an old Mexican woman to hurry with his dinner. He ate his food in silence. He was thinking whether he ought to make certain that Bud and Ralston should meet. Presently he arose, walked to the corral and saddled his horse.

About to mount and ride away, he noticed a horseshoe missing from the left hind foot of his animal. Scruggs paled and his mouth began that peculiar twitching. Where had he lost that shoe? What if Budd should find a three-legged trail that led to his corral? What if Bud should find out— His mouth became dry and he licked his lips feverishly. Rapidly his mind went over the scene of the night before. His horse had become entangled for a moment in the loose wire, he remembered that. He had kicked the animal and it had broken away. Had that jerked off the shoe?

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His eyes were glancing suspiciously in all directions. Suddenly they fell upon a horseshoe lying in the corral near the feed box where his horse had eaten. He rushed over, snatched it up and examined it eagerly. An expression of great relief came over him as he recognized it as the one his horse had worn.

"Whew," he grunted and wiped his perspiring forehead. "Whew, that was close. I thought I'd lost it on the trail."

His whole manner changed. His mouth straightened. He glanced at the shoe again and smiled before tossing it carelessly aside.

Scruggs intended taking no chances now. He would ride to Ralston's at once. He could not have Bud and Ralston "talk it over" and then— He would see that they shouldn't. He wanted action and he wanted it at once, so he climbed hurriedly into the saddle and loped down the trail.

Arriving at the Ralston ranch, Scruggs engaged one of the cow hands in conversation until Ralston rode up. Immediately Scruggs beckoned him aside. His manner was friendly—almost confiding.

"Bob," he began earnestly, "I came over to tell you somethin' the minute I heard about it. Bud Loman," he lowered his voice, "Bud Loman is lookin' for you."

"Is he?" said Ralston pleasantly. "That's funny. He knows where I'm at, don't he?"

"Sure he does, but listen—he's aimin' to kill you!"

"*Sacramento!*" from Ralston in mock seriousness. "What for?"

"I don't know exactly, but it's about that water hole."

"Oh! I see," said Ralston quietly. "But that'll all be settled at the next term of court."

"Bud says he aims to settle it right now. He says he's tired o' your monkeyin' around with the law like you was scared to do your own talkin'. He said he reckoned you'd go on bein' troublesome all your life unless he pumped you full o' lead. Kinder hated to do it, he 'lowed—you was such a cowardly cuss—but he guessed it was up to him."

"Bud knows better than that," said Ralston simply. "He knows there's no good to talkin' like that. He's got the tank now an' I'm not kickin'. I'll get it when the case comes up an' he'll have no kick comin'. We've got courts to settle things like that."

"So that's the way it is, eh?" said Scruggs, sneering. "What's the matter? You 'fraid o' him?"

"Yes," said Ralston quietly, "I am. I'm awful' afraid Bud will lose his temper an' then something's likely to happen that everybody'll be sorry for later. I'll look him up an' have a little talk with him."

"Have a little talk—huh! Bud's through with talk now."

"Oh, I don't know. I'll see him anyhow."

"You sure will—no doubt about that. Look him up, huh— Well I'll swear. Why you poor fool, *Bud's lookin' you up now!*"

Scruggs mounted his horse to leave.

"Look him up," he laughed mockingly. "Well, I'll declare— If I didn't have no more guts than you've got I wouldn't look nobody up. I'd *dodge* them!"

Turning his horse abruptly, he called over his shoulder, sarcastically:

"Look him up if you want to, old dynamite, but you'd better do your explodin' with somethin' better than air. Bud don't like drafts any too well."

Ralston watched Scruggs ride away in silence. After a moment, he turned to the house thoughtfully. He wanted to see Bud Loman at once. He wanted to avoid all trouble and realized that such talk as had just come from Scruggs was sure to bring it on unless silenced immediately.

He walked about the house, frowning and thinking. There had been a change in Bud's manner lately, no question about that. Bud had seemed colder to him—more distant. Well, there was no good in putting it off. He would ride over to Bud's at once.

Taking his pipe from the mantel and lighting it carefully, he picked up his hat and started for his horse—then hesitated. With a shrug, he returned to the room and picking up a small automatic from the table, held it for a moment in his hand. Half ashamed he dropped it into his coat pocket and continued on his way. Without looking back he rode down the trail that led to Bud Loman's ranch.

Bud was riding toward Ralston's. After leaving Scruggs he had gone home, taken several drinks and had wiped and oiled his pistol.

He was riding along now, his hat pulled down over his forehead and humming softly to himself. His eyes were narrowed and a half-smile, half-sneer, was playing about

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his lips. There were men in Sonora, who, having witnessed another memorable occasion, would have known at once that this, indeed, was Bud's most dangerous mood.

Ralston and Bud recognized each other as they both entered the wide opening of Steer Cañon from opposite ends. Neither drew rein, nor slackened his pace.

When they were about forty paces apart, Bud drew up sharply and Ralston involuntarily did the same. Ralston attempted to speak at once.

"Bud," he began, but got no farther.

With uncanny rapidity Bud whipped out his revolver and fired.

Ralston instinctively threw up his left hand to protect his face and a searing streak burned his fingers as the bullet, slightly deflected, barely grazed his temple. Bud fired again but missed as Ralston slid squatting to the ground. His horse bolted forward, getting between himself and the cursing Bud for just a second, but it gave him time to get his gun. Swinging to one side, the rapid *Put—Put—Put* of the automatic renewed the firing.

At the first shot Bud straightened in the saddle and grabbed the pommel with his left hand. He winced slightly at the second. A stream of blood was pouring from his mouth and a red blotch was forming under his shoulder. He fired again at Ralston, but his horse, now badly frightened and no longer reined, whirled and bolted a second too soon.

Ralston saw the animal dash madly in the direction of home, Bud hanging to the saddle with both hands and swaying from side to side. At times he seemed to be falling but always managed to hang on. It was a race of death.

At the trial, later, it was brought out that Bud, although mortally wounded with a wound that should have killed him instantly, had ridden all the way to the home corral and had managed to curse and pronounce Ralston's name before falling dead from the saddle into the arms of his distracted wife.

THE events which followed the killing of Bud Loman were quickly disposed of. Two State Rangers had come out from town and had covered the ground carefully. The scene that had been enacted at the shooting was as clear to them from the hoof-prints, foot-prints and emptied shells as if they themselves had actually witnessed the encounter.

Bob Ralston was closely questioned but no reason for doubting his version of the affair could be found. The Devil's Water Hole was visited—the scene of the broken fence that had caused the trouble—and, after a thorough examination into every detail bearing upon the case, the Rangers returned to the city and made their reports.

At the trial Bob Ralston was quickly exonerated from all blame in the shooting. It was clearly a case of self-defense. Of the broken fence at the water hole very little was said. One of the Rangers stated that he had visited the place and that a dim trail leading away from it had still been partly visible. He had followed it for a short distance and then had lost it in the wind-blown sand. This trail, he added, was made by a horse with a loose and slightly twisted left hind shoe.

A half dozen ranchmen living in the direction toward which that lost trail pointed testified that they had seen no one riding an animal of that description. One of these was Scruggs. Every one of them, including Scruggs, admitted—Scruggs' reason was that he had gone to bed early—that it could have been possible for some one to have ridden by without being seen.

So ended the trial and, as is usually the case, interest soon died to nothing and it was not long before the entire affair was practically forgotten.

Bob Ralston, however, did not forget, He had killed a man. That thought was constantly on his mind. It made no difference to him that he had shot in self defense. He had killed a man—a man, who, judged by western standards, was "all right" and had not deserved killing. He felt that Bud had been urged into his sudden fit of anger and down in his heart he suspected Frank Scruggs, but had no proof whatever.

One day, while these thoughts kept running through his mind, he suddenly remembered something. How had he failed to think of it before? That day after the fence was broken—the day that Scruggs had come to warn him about Bud—Scruggs was riding a horse whose left hind shoe was missing. The Rangers had said "the left hind shoe was loose and twisted." The shoe from Scruggs' horse *had just come off*—the condition of the hoof had shown it plainly enough.

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Ralston remembered perfectly now. He had intended calling Scruggs' attention to it at the time but the nature of the conversation had caused him to forget to do so. How stupid he had been. It was all so clear now. Scruggs had come to incite him against Bud—Scruggs had torn down that fence himself, and had then evidently told Bud that he, Ralston, was the man to be suspected. What a cur he was!

His first impulse was to confront Scruggs and mete out the same punishment that Bud had intended. This thought, however, he quickly abandoned. There was enough blood on his hands already. There must be another way.

To kill Scruggs would not help matters now. To humiliate him and run him out of the country—that was another matter. He stood thinking. Suddenly he smiled. The smile broadened and became a genuine chuckle as he strolled slowly into the house.

The Scrugg ranch cornered with the Ralston ranch upon the highest point of a swelling hill. From this spot the valley below was plainly visible. The Ralston house, set in a clearing in this valley, could be seen in detail, a clear day having the telescopic effect of bringing it much closer than it really was.

Frank Scrugg, although naturally lazy, performed one ranch duty well. It required very little exertion. It consisted simply of "riding the fences" to see that they were everywhere intact.

Every few days he would mount his horse and lazily follow the trail that led around the pasture. Each time that he reached the corner overlooking the Ralston ranch house he stopped and viewed the place with interest. He often wondered about the now uncommunicative Ralston. He wondered how "That little —— was takin' it about the killin' " and just how much he knew or suspected about the part that he, Scruggs, had played. Here was a man whose courage he had once despised—who had then killed the dangerous Bud Loman with no more fear than he would have shown for a common Mexican herder. Queer duck, he thought. Worth watching.

One day, on one of his rides along the fence, Scruggs saw Ralston in the yard below firing his automatic at an old iron wash kettle some fifty yards away. The sharp *Put* of the gun would come up from the valley, followed by a deep *Plunk* as the bullet struck the heavy iron, and then a whistling scream as it ricocheted in a new direction.

Scruggs watched with interest for a few moments, then grunted.

"Humph!" he said, "Who couldn't hit that big iron slug?" He was about to ride on when he noted a fourth sound after one of the shots—the metallic *ting* of a bullet striking tin. He looked more closely. Then he saw it.

There to the right of that old kettle, quite a distance, in fact, stood a battered old lard bucket. After each shot the dust would rise somewhere in its vicinity. Occasionally the bucket would shake quickly and that sharp *ting* would sound up from below.

Suddenly it dawned upon Scruggs. This man wasn't trying to hit the kettle at all. He was aiming at it first—but great suffering coyotes, he was *shooting billiards off the kettle and punching holes in the can!*

Day after day Scruggs rode to the corner and watched this same interesting performance. Each time, he noticed, the can was being hit more frequently.

He wondered what this little runt had in mind. Surely no sane man would practise in this manner day after day unless he had something in mind.

The more Scruggs wondered, the less he made of it. His curiosity began working overtime. He determined to find out. Of course, he couldn't ask Ralston himself because he felt that somehow Ralston included him in that Loman affair—well he'd find out. He just had to know.

That night he had a chat with Jack Squires, his foreman on the ranch. Jack listened to the queer story about Ralston and his curiosity, too, was aroused. It was decided that Jack, who was welcome at the Ralston place, should pay a friendly visit and find out what he could. Jack left at once.

SCRUGGS could hardly wait for his return. It was almost midnight when Jack rode up, but Scruggs greeted him eagerly.

"What's it all about?" he asked at once.

Squires dismounted and shook his head.

"Queer," he muttered in his slow way, "mighty queer." They walked to the porch and sat down. Scruggs was all ears.

"Well," began Squires, drawling it out, "well, I just sat around with that little duck

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for an hour or so talkin' about this an' that an' finally I says to him, I says, 'Bob, what in the name o' goodness are you peckin' at that old kettle out in the back yard for all the time? I seen you,' I says, 'nearly every time I ride up to the corner of the fence.'

"He looks at me right sharp for a minute an' then he gets thoughtful an' says right sweet-like, 'An' tell me, Jack,' says he, 'Has Frank Scruggs seen me too?'

"I told him I reckon so 'cause you ride up that way quite a bit an' he looks sad an' says kinder low to himself, 'Too bad,' he says, 'Too bad.'

"Well I couldn't see no sense to that so I don't say nothin' at all. He don't neither but just sorter looks away off at nothin'. Pretty soon he turns 'round to me an' he says, 'Jack,' he says, 'you're a good boy. You ain't got no blood on your hands,' he says, 'but I have. Got blood all over 'em. I killed a good man, Jack,' he says, 'who had no business dyin'. It wasn't his fault, Jack,' he says, sorrowful, 'It was a dirty no-'count bum that got him bumped off,' he says.

"After a while he goes on again. 'That scoundrel,' an' you should have seen his eyes when he said that, 'That scoundrel played me an' Bud a dirty trick. He tore down Bud's fence one night an' then let on to Bud like it was me that done it. Bud was sore—course he was, Jack—an' he aims to get me pretty quick. I was tryin' to fix it up with him an' tell him who did this job but Bud don't give me no chance. He just starts pepperin' an' I peppers back an'—well, I got Bud, that's all!'

"You should have seen him about that time, Frank. He looked around like he was goin' to throw a fit or bust out cryin' I don't know which. By an' by he says again, 'An now, Jack,' he says, 'poor Bud's gone an' he can't get this bird no more—so it's kinder up to me to do it for him, ain't it?' I didn't say nothin'.

"Then he looks at me again, shakin' his head. 'But' he says, 'Bud wouldn't want me to shoot this rat like I shot him—in a fair fight. He wouldn't want me to shoot him with a good straight shot like he was a man, would he? 'Course he wouldn't! 'Twouldn't be fair to Bud. So you see I'm just practisin' now to *bounce him off with a stray*.'

"Well, we sits there silent-like for a long time an' I'm just about to leave when he sorter perks up an' smiles. 'Jack,' he says, an' he shore looked happy, 'I just finished with my practisin' today. I got my shootin' down pretty good an' I figure I can do Bud's job for him this comin' Wednesday night.' "

Scruggs eyes were staring wildly and his lips were twitching convulsively, but Squires had not finished and did not notice.

"You know," he was saying, "You know, I never could get that little dickens to tell me who he was after at all. He'd just look a way off an' wouldn't say a word. Then, when I got ready to go he took hold o' my arm an' he says, pleadin'-like, 'Jack,' he says, 'Don't tell nobody what I told you—promise me, Jack—' an' here's the funny part—'An' specially,' he says, *'Don't tell Frank Scruggs!'* What do you reckon he meant by that?"

He turned to Scruggs, but Frank was already entering the house. His face was ashen and the twitching at his mouth distorted his whole features. He rushed to an old calendar that hung over the washstand.

Scruggs turned the pages of the pad in frantic haste. A pudgy, shaking finger traced the dates across the sheet. "Great guns!" he moaned, "An' this is Tuesday!"

BOB RALSTON and his faithful hound were coming down the fence line, trying to find the scent of a stray coyote that had invaded the pasture the night before. They had worked around to that part of the pasture which stretched for quite a distance along the main road.

As they came around the turn, Ralston saw a heavily loaded wagon, packed with furniture, bedding, and what-not, swing into the road from the lane that came from the Scruggs ranch. Frank Scruggs was driving and seemed to be in a hurry.

As he leaned out of the wagon to look back he recognized Ralston. His whip cracked loudly upon the backs of the still fresh mules and the team went dashing down the road at a lively gallop. Ralston smiled. This *was* Wednesday!

He rode on with the dog as if nothing had happened that concerned him in the least. As they reached the point where the wagon had entered the road, the hound sniffed the ground suspiciously. Ralston smiled again.

"Come on, boy!" he said cheerfully, "Come on away from there! You're a wolf dog, boy—them's rabbit tracks."

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The JEST of the JUNGLE

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

by Gordon MacCreagh

Author of "Out of the Jungle," "The Courage Medicine," etc.

THE señhores are in search of a river man and have been recommended to me? *Bom*, it is well; for I am above all things a man of the upper rivers.

Do I know the river Uaupes as far up as Brazil touches on the borders of Colombia? *Dientro*, have the señhores not been told that I am Theophilo da Costa?

Would I be willing to take the señhores so far? Umm-mm, at a price I would—but wait. I was going to say that for a proper price I would take the señhores into any part of all Amazonas—even into the country of the Jivero head shrinkers, if their desire and their foolishness went so far. But I lay a check on my hasty words and add a condition. It is: I will do so if I am satisfied as to the reason for the desire.

Your desire is to take a vengeance for the killing of Billee the gringo? Ha, that was boldly spoken. But—you will pardon—it is my observation that it is not usual for señhores from America of the North to make so arduous a travel for the sake of a little feud. A travel that will not be so comfortable, I can tell you, as sitting on the deck of this great hundred and fifty-foot steamer of the Companha Navigazione and drinking the cool water of the *pupunha* fruit.

You desire also, having taken that vengeance, to secure the green stones for the sake of which Billee was killed?

Oho, that is different again. The little green stones! Ho ho, the jest of the jungle! It has drawn *you* into its net now, yes? Truly, a wide-flung net is that jest. A merry jest for half the nations of the earth! Listen to the procession of them.

First there was the German, the *scientifico* who discovered the joke. Then Billee the gringo. Then the two robbers, the Americano and the Swede who followed Billee. Then the gang of our Brazilian cutthroats with the Frenchman and the Spanish half-breed who followed those two. And now the señhores.

And which of all of them ever came back?

Señhores, the jungle is no place for men who do not know the ways of the jungle—even though green stones be many. And who knows the truth about the little green stones? My advice to you, er—tenderfeet, as you call it, no?—is to put out of your minds the hunting for the little green stones. And as for the vengeance—that is another matter. But since you are Americanos of

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the North and foolhardiness is born to you, even as it was to that Billee, I will not waste my advice born out of my experience. And since you are kin to Billee, I will even tell you the truth about the matter. For Billee I have counted to be my friend; and if any man know the whole truth about this jest, it is I, Theophilo da Costa; for I have been in the net since its first weaving. Look you, I will even show you the first of those evil stones, the earliest snarl of that twisted jest.

Wait but till I loosen this money belt and— Ah, so is better. I breathe more freely. I put on weight, señhores, idling here in Manaos between trips. But a week among the rapids of the Gabriel and a day or two of the malaria will put me in condition again.

Look, a wonderful pebble, no? Large as a turtle's egg, and of a perfect green, without flaw. A stone of quality. Two hundred and thirty-five carats at least; and it will cut to close to a hundred. A stone that would buy a governorship of a state.

The señhor is not impressed? Oho, you know something of stones then? You think— You are afraid that— You regret to say—

Ha ha! Say it, señhor. Have no compunction. For I have known it myself these six months and more. A piece of a bottle glass, no? The joke, as you say, was on me.

Ho ho, and what a joke! A joke, truly, of the jungle's best. But I was not the only fool. For look you, by reason of that joke eleven men lie dead. Eleven, and who knows how many Indians? And there will be more. For those Desana of the upper Uaupes do not forgive killings I tell you, señhores, I who know those people, there will surely be more—though the green stone be but a piece of a bottle carefully rubbed down on a rock and chipped at the corner to show color. Truly one of the grimmest of the jokes of the jungle.

And yet, señhores, I who have been watching this thing from the very beginning, have a belief that this is not such a very great joke on me after all; for I am at least alive. And it is my observation that, just as some men are born blessed in the cities for a bustling life in the city, and some are born in the country for a peaceful life in the fields; so are a few men born with a curse that destines them for the jungle; and to the jungle they must go.

Them the jungle tries out on its steaming cauldron of hell, and of those few, it kills the most, as unfitted. But the very few, those in whose blood it is to love its very wildness and its loneliness and its ferocity, it takes to its bosom as would a wolf mother; testing them every now and then to make sure that they are still worthy, but permitting them to survive.

And look you, I have been a man of the upper rivers for twenty years, and I have been through this latest most elaborate trial of the jest. And I live—though eleven men lie dead. And there will be more, I tell you; there will surely be more. For others will surely go up on the false trail of the green stones, not knowing the ways of the jungle.

WITH the German it began. The *scientifico* who hunted after roots and herbs. He came in, loaded down with tin boxes and presses and blotting papers, prepared for a two years' stay among the unknown plants of the foot hills. And within four months he went out again, hurrying in a great excitement, loaded down with the weight of some tremendous secret. He reached as far as Belem, three thousand miles from our jungles and almost to safety. And then the jungle smiled the first slow, cold smile of this jest and reached out its long arm and caught him with something or other that he had contracted while within its depths; and he died.

The tale came up to me in due course, for it is my business to keep track of those who go out carrying secrets from my country of the upper rivers.

Shortly came Billee the gringo, all pink and new and young and full of enthusiasm, knowing nothing at all and displaying a child's trust of all men in his big clear eyes, and having no secret of any sort.

He came to look for emeralds, he told all and sundry with a delightful frankness, and he sought information and advice. All Manaos smiled at the innocence of the youth. As though anybody who knew anything at all about emeralds would tell it to the first naive stranger.

So presently, since all those who want to travel the far reaches of our upper rivers come eventually to Theophilo, this Billee came also to me. And he stood with his legs wide apart and his hands deep in the pockets of his breeches, and demanded of me with his engaging cheerfulness—for all the world

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as though he were asking to be advised on a little tour of the city—that I direct him to the good God knew where between the border of Brazil and Colombia to hunt for emeralds.

But what need to explain this so ingenuous youth? The señhores know, of course, how Billee looked and spoke. Fresh from the nursery almost. So I said to him to dissuade him:

"*Amigo*, do you know what you ask? Consider this travel to the further Uaupes. The steamer will take you to Santa Isabel; seven days—or ten or maybe fifteen—depending upon the rain and the current,

which no man knows. From there on is our country of the upper rivers. Jungle conditions hold and civilization is left behind. One goes by *batelão*, big dug-out canoes with an added freeboard of a pair of ax-hewn planks on either side. Six paddles to the canoe and a thousand pounds of trade goods. Comfort has ceased. From dawn to dark is the rule of the river. One eats as one goes and one sleeps in the wet bottom of a canoe.

"Yet there is no hardship of travel for some ten days till one comes to the *caxoeiras*, the rapids. São Gabriel the first. Forty miles of bad water, where one progresses by sending an Indian to crawl from tree to overhanging tree with a long rope which he makes fast to a limb, and then all haul up together on the rope. After the Gabriel is peace for some fifteen days; except that at the mouth of the Uaupes, which comes in at the right bank, one enters a belt of *piume* flies which lasts four days. Then peace again for three days. Then another accursed belt of insects for seven more days. Then the *caxoeira* of Ipanoré, where all baggage must be taken out of the canoe and carried past the bad water over a trail, and the empty boat then be hauled up by rope and push and sheer sweating muscle against the current and over the rocks. Men have been known to slip on those slippery rocks and be snatched away in an instant by the devils of the whirlpools or be smashed by the plunge of the heavy canoe.

"If one passes the Ipanoré in safety, comes in five more days the *caxoeira* Jauareté; and after that a *caxoeira*, or two or three, every day or so. What matter their names? But there are some nineteen or twenty, till one reaches the country which may, or may not, be the border between Brazil and Colombia.

"A long and a bad travel, my young señhor. One which is made with difficulty and danger even by experienced men who know the upper rivers. And you, who are not a river man, nor even a geologist, would go careering up in those jungles, hoping to find ground wherein grow emeralds. Señhor, this is not the talk of a sane man."

But this Billee had a confidence as great as his innocence; and he said with a sturdy insistence that he was not so crazy as he might seem; that he had a map—as though that were the final surety.

Whereat I could do no other than laugh out loud. For, let me tell you, señhores, there is a traffic in maps of treasure said to be hidden in this place and in that place. Treasure there is in this vast Amazonas of ours. Treasure in breath-snatching quantities; and men but begin to know what the river fringes of our jungles hide. But certain astute rogues, who learned during the wild rubber days that gringos are credulous, take advantage of that very fact to prepare maps of the most circumstantial character upon paper taken from the walls of our old buildings, and then set out to ensnare gringos who are young and unwary, as was this Billee.

All of which I told him. But he had all the courage of his youth; and he insisted doggedly that his mind was made up to go. Even though his map might be false, he must learn to stand upon his own feet. And he laughed at the adventure of the thing, and spread his big loose shoulders to sniff up great draughts of air through that upturned nose of his; and he said—as though such privation were no more than a joke—that he would at least know what roots and herbs

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might be eaten in the jungle; for while he was truly no geologist, his training had been as a botanist.

It was then that a glimpse of the light came to me. For I remembered that German who was also a plant hunter, and I remembered his excited hurry; and I saw here a connection between those two who labored together on so profitless a subject.

And thus it was that I, who considered myself wise in the ways of the jungle, was drawn craftily on to the stupendous joke which the jungle was preparing with men's lives as the laughing points. I, who had laughed carelessly with the other river men at the temerity of that German *scientifico* who had thought to wrest a treasure from *our* jungles. For, seeing the connection, I said:

"Oho, this is different. The trail begins now to smell of meat."

And I asked Billee to tell me more of his map. And he, poor fool, immediately produced it and showed it to me, laying bare at one stroke all his knowledge for any experienced man to seize and make use of.

"Put it away, most simple one," I told him. "And let no man ever know that you possess such a thing; for it *may* be that it has value."

And when he did so, wondering and with a hurt look in his eyes, I told him that I myself had no time just then to go paddling off after every such breath of a rumored treasure that came with the down-river winds; but that if he insisted on making the venture and going off on this wild hunt after treasure I would find for him the necessary outfit. So he laughed again with the carelessness of a boy who goes off to hunt wild pig of an afternoon and said that, treasure or no treasure, he would at least have the joy of the venture, and that the assistance I offered would be as a gift from God, for then he was sure he would succeed; and he shook hands with me with enthusiasm and said that we should be partners.

Truly that was a youth with a charm as great as his folly—which was very great. But my heart went out to him. So I made out for him an order on the house of Araujo Companha for stores and trade goods such as he would need; and I found for him a canoe and a good crew and a *capitan* for the crew. An up-river Indian who came down now and then with cloaks of parrot feathers for the carnival dancers. Small and wizend like a *makako* monkey he was, and he lived with his people like monkeys on platforms in the trees above the flood water of the Uaupes, and all Manaos knew him as a great rogue and a clever thief. But he was a cunning and clever canoe man. So I said to him:

"Pacheco, I know you for a great scoundrel and a shrewd jungle man. And you, Pacheco *mio*, know me. So I deliver this babe into your hands to take him where he will. See that he comes back as nearly whole as possible."

And I paid him in advance. One rifle of Winchester with a hundred cartridges—which was good pay; but I exacted much from the man in giving this great infant into his care. Besides, I am one who has always had a preference for gambling on a business deal with a man whose face I like, rather than with one who comes with a wallet full of slimy references. And the face of this Billee was a good face. Young, of course, and empty of experience; but, as we river men say, there was rock beneath the mud. I am one also who believes in luck; and who could tell but that this one might meet with the luck that so often comes to the foolish?

So Pacheco took him in his charge and they went off up river and were swallowed up in the silence of the jungle; and I heard no further word for a space.

THEN in the course of time there came down from the Rio Uaupes those two others of whom the señhores have heard tell as the killers—but this jest is by no means so simple as a mere killing; but is as twisted as the Rio Uaupes itself. These two were the Americano and the Swede, who were the next two selected by the jungle for the furtherance of its great practical joke. They had been away on some business of their own—experimenting with palm oil nuts, they said—and they made a loud talk in the Praça da Cathedral, displaying the bottle glass and proclaiming to the world that they and their countryman, Billee, had found the place of the green stones, and that they came now to raise money for the purpose of continuing operations.

And all Manaos gathered with goggling eyes to look at the green glass, and spat with disgust and said:

"*Oué fortuna dum loucol* What luck of a fool! To think that that swaddling child

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should have had a true direction; and we—may the archangels spit upon us—we but laughed at him."

But I said to myself again—

"Oho, the trail smells not so good."

For I judged this Billee by the open face of him to be no man to make a partnership with one who outfitted him in Manaos, and later to pick up with two others in the jungle, countryman or no countryman. So I sought out the two in the *Botequim dos Estrangeiros* where they drank the noon hours through, and ordered three bottles of *guaraná* with rum in it and engaged them in conversation.

Yes, they said, Billee was their good friend and compatriot—from the very same state as the Americano, attaching some sort of virtue to that fact. And Billee had had a map of the place of the green stones; but being green himself, had not known how to get to it. So they had joined their experience to his information and had made a partnership; and here was the sample of the first finding, and all they needed now was money to continue the operations and they would return immediately to their good friend Billee who had remained behind to guard the camp.

A good story and circumstantially rendered. I did not ask them why they did not register the claim under the mining law and so protect themselves; for our mining laws in Brazil are not so well established as are yours of America of the North. And of what use are mining laws in the upper rivers where there is no law?

So I gave them congratulations; and, thinking myself cunning, fell into the net which the jungle had spread for me while it chuckled at my foolishness for thinking that I knew its ways. Though I am one of those selected children of the jungle whom it permits to survive, it blinded me with the blindness of a fool who is wise in his own estimation; and I bought the fragment of a beer bottle for a *conto* and a half of *milreis*—which they swore was but a tenth of what such a stone was worth—from these two scoundrels who were already marked for death. Yet they accepted the money with an alacrity which should have made me suspicious. But, as I have said, when the jungle prepares one of its elaborate frauds, its children have the wits of children.

So they purchased food and equipment and trade goods enough for a whole exploration and celebrated their good fortune after the manner of the señhore's country, by remaining very drunk for three days. And then they went off up river again.

But even in my folly I was not altogether a fool. For that long Americano and that heavy Swede had not hoodwinked me one bit beyond the matter of the bottle glass; and my judgment of Billee remained as that of a man of honor—even though he did come from the same state as that other.

So I called an Indian of the São Gabriel named João, who was a convert to the mission; but for all that a keen jungle man and one to be trusted. And I told him to take a light dug-out and two men and to follow the trail of those two to their place, and to tell Pacheco to send me word of the happenings in the upper Uaupes country.

Within the hour he went, in a light *uba* which could skim along under the shadow of the overhanging branches of the shore and keep a sharp watch on a heavily loaded flotilla like the others.

And in the course of some three or four months he came back and reported that he had followed the pair for forty-three days by sight till he had lost them among the many channels of the Umarituba shallows, and had then followed for twelve days more by questioning among river Indians. Which was almost as good as following by sight; for nothing happens in the upper rivers which the Indians of those rivers do not know; and what they see they remember in every detail, for their minds have never been trained to write a thing down for record and then forget it.

So he traced those two all the way up to the Rio Kerary which comes in at the left bank of the Uaupes at the *moloca* of Yapu Ua, a Desana chief of some eighty fighting men. And at the Rio Kerary, João told me, those two had turned in and traveled for two days till they came to a place where there was a camp and a great digging in the clay bank of the river; and that there they had stopped and made camp again and let word be known among the *molocas* that they would pay two ounces of salt per day for men to work for them.

BUT of Billee and of Pacheco there was no sign in that place. So João, since he knew the *Geral* talk and the proper ceremonies for visiting in safety, went to the *moloca* of Yapu Ua to make further inquiry; and

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there he learnt from an Indian that another Indian had told him how he had secretly followed a canoe some months before in the hope of getting some loot by night, in which canoe was a white man with a crew of Indians But that he had been foiled in his hope of loot by the alertness of the *capitan* of those Indians, who was as jungle-wise as the white man was simple. And how two other white men with a big canoe and a crew of down-river Indians had overtaken the other white man in camp; and how he, lying below them in his *uba*, had heard the sound of fighting with guns; and then the next morning the two white men had gone on alone in their canoe. Whereupon he gave up the following, being frightened, for these were bad men.

So do the rumors of the upper rivers travel down to the city; and that was the tale that came down of the killing; and I remembered how Billee in his innocence had babbled of this Kerary river. So I went before the altar of São Sebastian in the cathedral and laid oath upon myself; for I said:

"Oho, the trail smells now very foul. A cleaning up must be done."

The señhores, who spoke of a vengeance, will understand. For this Billee was my partner after all—even though it had been no more than his spoken word. And if a man does not hold by his partner, with whom shall he hold? So I sent word up to Santa Isabel to make ready a *batelão* of my own which I kept hauled up there on the beach in the charge of a nut gatherer who was friendly to me; and I told him to summon certain Indians whom I named to him by name, a double crew and good fighters all; and to send them down to me swiftly. For the little stern wheel steamer that makes the trip to Santa Isabel every month or so had just wheezed away on its hazardous journey, and it could not arrive there and return—even if there were no accidents—and then be ready to go up again in less than a month at best.

Not that there was a particular hurry; for a vengeance may well wait for a year or so and be none the worse for the keeping. Yet I said to myself that the secrets of the jungle, such as the place of the green stones, sometimes leak out, and it would be well to establish myself before others should hear of it and I should have then to fight for my partnership inheritance. Also it happened that I could devote the time just then out of my own business to attend to this matter conveniently. So I made my plans leisurely with the thought that it would be no more than a justice to let those two labor a while to get out some of those stones, which would be blood money for masses for their own souls.

But first I paid to João, the convert, the reward which I had promised him; wherein I showed that I was still a fool. For João proceeded immediately to drink up the money, and babbled his tale in the market places; and the people nodded and said:

"*Deus lhe benza.* God rest his soul. That boy, with all his luck, was not one to find such a treasure in the upper jungles and keep it. It is clear now how those other two got his map and found the great green stone that they brought for sale."

But I was annoyed; for the jungle, anxious to play its jest out to the end, had let loose the scent before I was ready. And, believe me, señhores, this is one of the wizardries of the jungle. Comes a tale of a profit to be wrested out of its dark maw, and immediately fools who know nothing of its lurking dangers and its cunning pitfalls rush forth with insufficient preparations, or with no preparations at all, to win their fortunes in a day—and they pay with their lives the inexorable toll of the jungle. A whisper of a stolen treasure from the dim distances, and killers immediately scurry like rats fast upon the trail of killers.

Hardly had the drunkard's half-misunderstood talk gone forth, when there became apparent a great hurrying and a whispering among certain of the hangers-on to no known business, who are always to be found round the tables of the *botequims* of the dock front. *Salteadores* all, scum which the tide of rubber, when it swiftly fell, left littering the water fronts of Manaos.

Great preparations were in hand with clumsy secrecy for the purchasing of boats and the hiring of paddle men and the laying in of such goods as are needed for up-river trade. They would have kept their plans secret, those river rats. But if a secret can leak out of the jungle, where it is known to only a few, what chance has a secret of treasure along the Manaos water front? When the jungle plays, such matters become fate.

All the most hidden rumors came to me; for I am one who believes that fate assisted by a little precaution is likely to be a good fate.

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CHIEF among these *expedicionistas* was one Luis, whose wife kept a bawdy hotel for sailors, on the profits of which he flaunted himself in the drinking shops under the title of Dom Luis Pereira. With him was a gathering of the nationalities, some nine or ten of them; men who had come to reap a fortune out of rubber when rubber was black gold; and when the price of rubber dropped to the price of black mud they had never been able to get money enough to get out and away. So they picked up a living in sundry shady ways along the water front and waited, hungry for just such a chance as this one.

As the names came to me one by one I was disquieted; for my *batelão* had not yet arrived, and the preparations of these ruffians progressed apace. The most cutthroat crew of all Manaos water front was gathered for this treasure raid up the Rio Uaupes. My plan had been to carry out my feud at my leisure with those two who had gone before, and to establish myself on the digging which was mine by my partnership right with Billee, which I could then hold against all comers. But I could hardly hope to enter into a war of dislodgment against this fresh array of scoundrels; and it would be small comfort to me to reflect that they would probably wipe out my feud against those other two as soon as they arrived to take possession.

I found this João and took him by the throat.

"Sot," said I to him. "Renegade convert. Look now what you have done. There will be killings in the upper rivers; and upon your conscience they will lie and will cost you many penances at the hands of the good *padre* of the mission—to say nothing of the fine which I will impose upon you and all your family to supply me with labor for the passing of the *caxoeira* of São Gabriel.

But he placed his face on the ground and covered his eyes—for these converts do not fight back when one beats them. And he wept for my forgiveness and offered amends.

"Look señhor," said he. "I will take my *uba*, and will go swiftly to warn him."

"To warn whom, fool?" I demanded. And he said:

"Señhor, it is in my mind that maybe Pacheco and that white man are not dead. For I will confess. I made strict inquiries of the Indians of Yapu Ua, knowing that they would surely visit that place of the killing; and I hoped—the señhor himself cannot blame me—I hoped to get for a small price maybe the rifle of the white man or of Pacheco, since the Indians cannot use them, having no cartridges. But no man knew of any such loot."

I shook him by the throat so that his head rattled.

"Forty fools as well as a scoundrel," I said. "Do you think that those other two, the bad men, would have left any rifles lying about in the jungle?"

But he cried out that it was not so; sometimes in the confusion of a fight the Indians who were the servants of white men might pick up useful things, which they hid away; and though they might not be able to take them themselves, they sold them by description to other Indians who could go and find them. So he had hoped for a rifle perhaps. But no one of Yapu's men had heard of any trading in hidden loot with the down river Indians of those two bad men; and therefore it was in his mind that, though there might have been fighting, there was no killing, and that Billee and Pacheco had got away with all their property. Otherwise there would surely have been some small trifles out of their camp hidden away for later selling.

But to me that seemed to be a slim hope. For even if, through some providence of the good God, Billee might have escaped with his life, what chance would he have, new and inexperienced as he was, to survive the jungle; and even if that miracle should be, what chance would he have to defend his green stones from this new invasion of this cutthroat gang? None the less I beat João and told him that if it might be so, it was all the more reason for haste now; and that the most amends he could ever make would be to take his son, a sturdy canoe man, and race up river in his *uba*, traveling night and day, to tell my *batelão* men to travel down river likewise, or more so.

So he went. And I for my part saw to it that no time would be lost through any neglect of mine, once my *batelão* did arrive. And I made a diligent survey along the water front and in all the side creeks to ascertain what boats might be available in Manaos City for those filibusters. And as I inquired and inspected, I found myself beginning to be able to smile once more.

For you must know, señhores, that not

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every boat is fitted to travel the *caxoeiras;* as also not every man is fitted to go up into the upper rivers. Of craft, ships' boats were available in plenty in the city; keel boats with plank bottoms which would open out like the fingers of a hand upon being dragged bodily over the rocks. But not a single *batelão* with a solid bottom hewn out of a tree trunk. I could give to any one of those boats a month's start and would arrive the first at the Kerary.

IT IS in such little matters that the jungle favors its children who know the needs of the jungle. So I felt in a mood to make a jest of all these preparations. I met this Dom Luis and said to him:

"*Hola, como va'e?* I hear you are going on a big expedition up river."

For a moment he was taken aback; and then his little black eyes glowed like a peccary's, and he made as though to reach for his boot, where he carried the stiletto engraved braggingly with the warning—"*Não me ameaça.* Don't cross me."

Myself, I have never held with all these fancy ways of carrying a knife, such as in the boot or in the sleeve, concealed in order to enhance the surprize when produced. They serve to amuse boys and the theatrically minded. In full view in the sash is my habit, as the señhores may see; and I claim that a view of a well-used knife is in most cases as good as its use.

As it was with this Dom Luis. He dropped his raised foot to the ground and stuttered his anger, champing with his teeth just as do the peccary boars before rushing at a hunter.

"How—how do you know that I go up-river?" he demanded fiercely. For he thought that his secret was well kept among the gang that he had gathered.

"Aha," I told him, not without malice. "We of the upper rivers know all about everything that is coming to us."

"*Ouve lhe.*" He sneered back. "Listen at the man. *Então,* if you know so much, what do you know about my plans?"

"That the talk is that you make preparation to go up the Rio Negro into Venezuela and through the Casiquiari to the Rio Orinoco for the purpose of collecting egret plumes," I said without hesitation. Whereat he grinned and nodded with sudden friendliness. Till I smiled and added—

"And yet I, who have an urgent business of a little feud in the upper Uaupes, have been planning to pass you on the way."

With which I laid my hand upon my knife hilt, for I knew that his rage would be savage and without reason, as is the peccary boar's. So also it was. For he, though he knew that I might easily disembowel him while he reached for his boot, none the less did so, squealing his fury, and charged at me as though he were a whole herd.

As for me, this pleasant boar-baiting had gone farther than I had intended. I had my urgent business of the two white men whose time had come to die on the Kerary, and I could afford no leisure to defend a brawling case in the law courts of Manaos. So I take no shame to myself that I tripped him with my foot as he charged blindly, and I ran away laughing.

After that, Dom Luis made much boasting of what he would do to me when next we met, and cried aloud in all the rum shops that he was looking for me. But under cover of his outcry he was very cunning. He put speed to his preparations for departure and worked with more silence than I gave him credit for. So that he actually threw dust in my eyes and got away with his gang before I knew of it.

For what play I gave him honor and took a black piece for myself. But I was not disquieted. I knew his two boats, and I knew by one means or other all about every man in his crews. The boats were heavy and wide, having room indeed for much freight; but slow. And while, with extreme care, the passage of the *caxoeiras* might be made in them, much time would surely be lost by reason of the keel seams requiring to be frequently caulked. Nor were the men any collection to worry about. Dock sweepings and mangrove creek Indians all, chosen for their cutthroat appearance rather than for their skill at the paddle.

That gang would not be difficult to outstrip in the race; and for that small benefit I was duly thankful. I would have time to cope with the two brigands who were already there at the Kerary, and could then make whatever arrangements I might to defend myself against this rapscallion crew who would shortly arrive. Just what I could do was not clear in my mind. But something surely would present itself when I was once on the spot, and anxiety about it now would not help the situation.

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So while I waited for my *batelão*, I busied myself with the laying in and packing of provisions and trade goods for a swift getaway and a long and hard travel; and I found time also to visit my good friend, the Padre Ferenz, and receive a blessing upon my urgent business.

So it happened that when four days later my *batelão* came I was all ready to load and start away on my journey to find out the last truth about Billee, and to find particularly those two who said that they were partners of Billee. I had to laugh when I say that my Indians, who knew my ways, had built a palm-leaf shelter over the after end of the *batelão* into which a man might crawl out of the sun. The leader of them, a good lad named Ochkochthithero, for he swam like a manatee, looked at me and grinned.

"For the *pirarucú*," he said.

I commenced to tell them sternly that there would be no *pirarucú* this voyage; that the river custom was to feed the crews *mandioca* and no more. But who can deny the nearness of that sun-dried fish without salt when it lies in bales and festers on the dock?

And indeed it is my custom to give each man each day a ration of this frightful fodder; as well as—on special days when they have worked hard—a tot of *caxirí*, which is a white cane rum of excoriating strength.

Other men of the rivers grumble at me and tell me that I pamper my crews and cause discontent amongst theirs. But who gets the most work out of his men, I ask them. Who can rely upon his crew to fight for him when need arises? Who travels five days to the other's six? I tell you, sefihores, that this little extra expense in feeding is amply repaid in good will and hard work—though, after all, it is my right; for a man who is willing to crouch under a palm leaf shelter in a canoe in company with half-dried *pirá* is deserving of much loyalty.

So it happened that within two hours of arriving my *batelão* was swinging up river again to the beat of six paddles against its sides and the hum of the men as they chanted their interminable *mm-hmmm mm-mha*, to give rhythm to their strokes.

Of the journey there is nothing to tell. Canoe travel is of all journeyings the most tedious. One sits on a bale of stinking fish till the cramp of one's limbs forces one to change one's position and sit on another bale. One eats and one sleeps and nothing ever happens. Only the Indians ply the paddles with endless monotony; and when they rest, the relays edge into their places and take the paddle without losing a stroke. And one broils in the heat and sleeps once more, and wakes and rubs the cramp from one's limbs and wishes that one might at least reach a *caxoeira* where there would be strenuous work for all to stretch the benumbed muscles. Yes, there are more exciting things than canoe travel on the upper rivers.

SANTA ISABEL I made in nine days, which is a run which the steamer itself would not be ashamed of. There they said that nothing had been seen of Dom Luis and his gang; that we had surely passed them among the maze of islands; or that they had taken the other bank, which even at that point of the great black river was below the horizon. But I gave that Luis credit for a man of some force of personality, and I deluded myself with no false hopes. The only hope which I allowed myself to think on was that there might have been something in that João's conjecture and that perhaps Billee had escaped with his life. So I pushed on without wasting an hour; for none knew better than I how urgent would be his need for assistance in these upper jungles, with white men as well as Indians hostile to him.

So, four days later, in the back-water below the race of O Forno, where the demon of the rapids keeps all his victims, we saw the bones of a new boat, broad and heavy, which had been capable of carrying much freight.

"The hand of the jungle!" said I to myself; and I laughed. Not that I thought that Dom Luis or any of his gang might have gone with the boat. By no means. None of that town-bred gang, I well knew, would remain in a boat to make that passage. They would walk the trail, of that I was sure. But I laughed to think of the discomfort and the cramps of all that crew crowded now into the one boat in addition to such cargo as they might have saved.

But my Indians laughed not at all. They pointed to the newest victim and murmured to one another; and they must needs all go ashore and make each man an offering of

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his full day's ration of *pirá* placed upon a table formed of a stone balanced upon two others. The while I fretted with impatience. But I knew that it was poor policy to interfere too much with the superstitions of Indians, and water men at that.

So, having appeased the demon, we traversed O Forno and the rest of the São Gabriel bad water without mishap. And a day later we swung out of the black water of the Rio Negro into the white water and the *piume* flies of the Uaupes. And three days later again, what should we see ahead of us but a great splashing of badly handled paddles which almost hid in the spray a big new boat loaded down to the gunwale edge with goods and men.

In another hour we overtook it with ease, my Indians swinging their paddles like one man and jeering a fresh insult to the others with each stroke.

Then at last I breathed freely and made reservation with myself to remember the good Padre Ferenz for his blessing. For the race, at least, was won; and that is more than a little, let me tell you, when one races against the misfortunes of our rivers, however great his experience. What the jungles of the Rio Kerary would bring forth in the near future, the jungle would decide. For the present I was well pleased. So, though the river was wide enough to pass well out of gun-shot, I could not resist to myself the pleasant game of edging close and calling across the water:

"*Ohé*, Dom Luis. You have lost your way. You must turn back to the joining of the waters and follow the black water North to the Casiquiari. Can you not see by all the signs that you travel in white water and westward?"

His only answer was to shake his fist and to shout the word which amongst us Brazilians means a killing.

It was an easy shot where he stood in the prow of his boat outlined dark against the sun on the water. But I shrugged.

"Or is it," I taunted him again, "since many names are similar in the upper rivers, that you meant, instead of Casiquiari the Cascaiary, as an upper branch of this Uaupes is called?"

"Yes yes, that is so. Caiary we are bound for," cried a dull-witted one of his gang who thought to cover their plan with this cleverness. But Luis cursed him for a fool; and, drawing the knife from his boot, made the sign of the cutthroat in the air.

"You think you are very clever, you Theophilo," he shouted. "You and all the rest of you up-river men. But I tell you that you can't keep to yourselves everything from us who come from below. What matter that you have the faster boat? In time we, too, will arrive at the Kerary; and then we shall see who shall find and who shall take."

I made a trumpet out of my hands and shouted back a farewell at him.

"Good," I called. "I shall tell the jungle chiefs of your coming with much loot."

Leaving which little thorn for him to reflect upon, we drew out of range. Only I shook my shoulders and threw back my head that he might see me laugh. For though I, Theophilo da Costa, do not fight against white men by stirring up the jungle Indians, it would do that gross fellow no harm to reflect that just a word to the Desana people, who use the poison blow gun, telling them that those who came after me were no friends of mine, would inaugurate a relentless stalking of them by day and night by invisible devils who would shoot swift death out of soundless tubes.

Three hours later they were out of sight. After which there was no pleasing relaxation any more to break the monotony, except the long string of *caxoeiras* which began at the Ipanoré, and the thought of my vengeance on the account of Billee, and the making of plans to hold my inheritance of the green stone digging against those robbers who followed with the treasure lust in their hearts—which treasure lust is but another word for the killing lust.

In due course then, after much hard work, I arrived at the Rio Kerary and proceeded up that river two days to the camp of the white man whom I had come so far to make a reckoning with. But I left my boat at a bend of the river and crept through the jungle to investigate; for I was not minded to come without precaution upon men who gambled with life for the sake of the little green stones.

I FOUND them, of course, without difficulty—and found with them my first surprize. The camp was at the edge of the river, where an ugly gash stood out yellow in the sun against the hot green of the jungle. A muddy stream, diverted in a

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little canal from higher up, flowed through the mess of bare clay and general rubble and polluted the stream below.

A common enough wash ground of prospectors. But the surprize, immediately ominous of death, was that Indians, standing as outposts, watched the camp from all sides. Men of the Desana they were, who lolled in clear enjoyment of an easy labor in which they were not interested, except for the pay that they earned thereby. But within the half ring of outposts stretching from river bank to river bank were the white men and those down river Indians whom they had brought with them; and their appearance was the very opposite of the easy enjoyment of the sentries. Nervous they were, all of them, and ill at ease, looking ever over their shoulders as men who feared some menace; and it was clear that the white men in turn stood guard over their workmen, who would otherwise surely have run away.

Here seemed to be no camp to be afraid of. So I slipped easily between two of the dozing sentries and stood suddenly confronting those two white men whom I had come to kill—and my surprize was immediately redoubled.

For after their first surprize at my presence, they, who should have had an evil conscience, were filled with joy to see me.

"*Amigo*," they hailed me, and, "deliverer." And they all but clung to me as would people from whose minds a great weight had been lifted.

"Now will everything be all right," they said. "For you have influence, Theophilo, and if you but give the word to the chiefs they will call those devils off."

"What devils?" I demanded with suspicion.

"We do not know," they said. "But we are hunted by night and by day. Shot at from all sides with rifles. We have sent presents to Yapu Ua, the chief of the *maloca* at the mouth of the river; but he disclaims responsibility among his men. Yet this is Desana country, and what other wild men are there?"

A tale astonishing enough. But I was not to be diverted so easily from the reason of my long journeying. I remained aloof and stern.

"Before there is talk of friendship and deliverance," I said "I have a question which I have made a long journey to demand of you two. What of Billee the gringo?" And I held my rifle muzzle low as I spoke.

Neither the Americano nor the Swede was a man to be easily browbeaten. Swindlers they were and men of little principle, but either could well take care of himself—in any ordinary circumstances. But just now they were in a condition of shattered nerves by reason of the harrying of which they spoke. As we who know the jungles know there is no fear that grips lonely men so completely as the constant expectation of an unseen death sneaking in out of the dim silences. So they, instead of showing fight, lied easily without turning a hair.

"Oh Billee," they said, and they made light of it. "We had a disagreement with Billee and we parted company."

"Oho," said I. "A disagreement, you call it? A disagreement arising suddenly upon the first meeting and entailing the shooting of guns and the complete disappearance of Billee and his crew."

At that they glanced at one another and the fight came into their eyes. But I held my rifle very ready. So they lied again. Yet seeing that I knew so much already they admitted the half.

"True, there was fighting," they said. "But no killing. Billee went safe."

Now señhores, I am one of those who lives in the upper rivers, and in our lives there is little room for sentiment. Yet my heart told me to believe this miracle. Though my mind remained full of suspicion and cast back swiftly on the probabilities and possibilities of the matter.

That Billee, new and full of inexperience, might have escaped with his life out of a fight with these two hard men was miracle enough. Yet what João, the convert, had told me flashed back into my memory. My heart took hold on this and kept singing that there was room for hope. And my mind took hold on the forlorn hope and told me that I had seen the jungle perform its miracle upon men before now. I had seen it take one of those whom it selected for its own children and, instead of killing him offhand, nurture him and bring out all the man that there was in him. And thinking on all this, I said to myself:

"That boy, after all, was strong and alert, in spite of his babe-like confidence; and his eyes were jaguar eyes, without fear; else he never could have laughed so cheerfully

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when he came away to plunge into the wilderness. And he had Pacheco—wise old scamp Pacheco—to teach him the lore of the jungle."

So I postponed the killing of those two whom I held at my rifle muzzle and said to them—

"Now listen carefully, you *bandidos*. You know that I, Theophilo da Costa, do not travel the rivers without Indians who can use the rifle as well as the paddle. Remember then that these Indians surround your camp with finger upon the trigger. So tell me certain things without trying any tricks."

This matter of my men surrounding the camp was, of course, what you Americanos call bluff. Yet in the present condition of the nerves of those two it was good enough to insure their good behavior. So I asked them first—

"This, then, is the digging which you made in partnership with Billee?"

They said it was so.

"Oho," I said, "and it was here that you found the great stone that you sold me?"

"Exactly so," said they.

"Show me, then, some others of your finding," I demanded swiftly.

At which their faces fell, and—

"We have had bum luck," they grumbled. "We have found no others."

"Oho," said I again.

And it was then that I determined to show my stone to a lapidary immediately upon my return to Manaos, and cursed myself for a simple fool for not having done so in the first instance. But an idea which was growing in my mind about green stones grew stronger, and I smiled to myself. But to them I said:

"That was luck in keeping with other that is coming to you. Listen now, you two so clever liars—and remember my Indians who watch your every move from beyond the line of your foolish sentries. Listen, and I will tell you some of the truth which you are hiding. This is what you did:

"You followed fast after this so foolish Billeee and you came upon him in his camp and you made him some proposal about joining your experience in partnership with his map; which he, being a man of honor, immediately refused. You thereupon fought with him and obtained possession of his map—or he in his innocence showed it to you, that map of the German *scientifico* which said, 'So and so many days up the Rio Kerary and at such and such a bend of the river.' And you came on immediately and commenced your digging. Finding nothing immediately, or at least, but the one stone, and your supplies running out, you came down to sell the one and to replenish your stores. Then you came back to dig some more. Is it not so?"

Excellent liars though they were, they could find no instant denial of my reconstruction of the story from the details which I already knew. They commenced indeed to recount a rambling tale. But their hesitation had been long enough. I cut them short and said:

"Enough, enough. I do not want to hear lies. Tell me instead some truth about this sniping at you with rifles."

So they told me sullenly enough how the shooting would come suddenly and without warning from any direction out of the blackness of the jungle; sometimes by broad daylight, but preferably at dusk when the finding of the shooters would be difficult; and how they had hesitated to plunge into the woods against hidden rifle-fire; the more so since they dared not go scouting singly, and together they dared not leave their down-river Indians, who would immediately steal their *batelão* and paddle away from that place.

By daylight the one or the other had scouted through the bush behind the digging; but had never found sign nor trail of their enemies. Therefore they blamed the shooting upon Indians, who alone would have such woodcraft. Yet again, what Indians would have rifles? And if so, how would they shoot so straight? For the Swede had been grazed once across the thigh and once by splinters from the cooking fire, and the Americano had almost smelt the balls that passed before his nose. So they had erected screens of branches between the camp and the jungle so that they might, at least, be hidden from view, and had hired these men of the Desana to act as outposts. But the shooting, though from longer range, still came with heart-stopping uncertainty; and the Indians were never molested; only the white men. So the nerves of both of them had just broken under the strain.

Truly they were in a pitiable case. I

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looked at the miserable pair beyond my rifle sights and I saw reason to laugh. Many reasons. For I was beginning to see how this elaborate jest of the jungle, in which they had acted as the lures to drag me into the net, was now turning against them. I was beginning to see an answer to the riddle of this shooting; vague, perhaps, and unformed, but yet—

"How long has this shooting been going on?" I asked them suddenly.

They told me, some two weeks, on and off. And then I laughed again. For the persistence of hope in my heart put the possibility into my mind. How a man, having lost his *batelão* in a fight with two other men, and having been wounded perhaps, might by this time have had time to recover. And then, *if* he had in him the makings of such a man as the jungle would accept for its own, a man of confidence and a courage that would not die and of a rugged health that would survive; and *if* he had with him a wise old jungle man to show him every trick and trap and danger of the jungle—why then it would be possible for such a man to learn and to absorb and to grow to be a child of the jungle indeed, and so to make his way overland, hiding from Indians and living, the good Lord and the jungle knew how, to this place, where men stole his digging of green stones, and to wage war upon them.

If! If! There were many ifs. But there remained room for hope. And so, instead of killing those two, I laughed; for surely was the great jest shaping itself against them. And as I laughed, I received confirmation for my lightness of heart.

In the form of a bullet it came. A crackle like a whip-lash in the air, followed by the smash and clatter in the jungle beyond, and then by the far smack of the report—from across the river.

"Celestes!" I ejaculated, and left my menacing of those two with my rifle to drop behind the pile of camp gear. For their part, their nerves were so overwrought that they screamed at the suddenness of this new angle of danger and leaped into the trench by which their wash water flowed.

And again I laughed. For that report was without any manner of doubt the long bullet of a high-power rifle of small caliber—such a rifle as Billee had carried.

And following on that first shot came presently the contrasting hum of a heavy ball and the subdued *tock* of a big bore from the cane fringe on the other side—such a rifle as I had given to Pacheco.

Well could I afford to laugh. Miracle though it was, and the many ifs notwithstanding, there was no mistake in my mind now. Billee, it must be himself! Billee the gringo and that good old scoundrel, Pacheco. Who else? But, *"Miravel,"* I said to myself, "he must have grown, that boy. Billee, the jungle man, he is. For this is no business of an amateur."

So I leaped up from my shelter and waved my arms and—

"Billee!" I shouted. *"Ohé* Billee! Behold me, Theophilo!"

But, *carramba*, a ball crackled before my face so close that I felt the splitting of the air. I take no shame that I shouted in dismay and dropped behind my shelter faster than any marmot. Long shooting it was; but too terrifyingly close to play friend and foe with. From the water trench I heard an ugly laugh and the sneer.

"The red monkey has bitten that Theophilo, and he is crazy. He thinks that this devil is that gringo babe in arms."

Yet for my part I was convinced. Who else would it be but Billee, grown from his babehood in these last hard months to the full stature of a jungle man, and attending very capably to his own vengeances? But, *assiste me Deus*, what was I to do? This was a dilemma that was not made any the easier by lying behind a pile of trade goods and thinking on it. I tried in a foolish sort of way to lift my hat on my rifle barrel and wave it in some sort of signal. But all the response it brought was more bullets; fast and viciously close.

NAILS of the Green One, but I was in an evil case. There, across the river somewhere in the jungle fringe, crouched my Billee, resurrected out of the dead; and here, behind a pile of trade goods lay I, whose urgent necessity it was to make connection with him against these bandits as well as against that other army of ruffians who were on the way to rob our mine. There was he, hiding in the jungle with all the craft that cunning old Pacheco could command, from white men and Indians alike. And here was I hiding from him behind a case of lard—or for all I knew, behind a case of dynamite.

Name of evil, it was a situation to drive

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one frantic. How was I to make myself known as a friend? On that side of the river they were expecting no friends in all the jungles of Amazonas. If I had dared to step down to the river's edge and gesticulate and shout, maybe I might have obtained recognition. But the river was wide at that bend—three hundred meters at least; a far distance for the voice to carry, or to recognize a man in the shadows of the jungle; and it was, besides, getting to be dusk—and those lads were wasting no time in conjecture about the personnel of their enemy's camp, nor losing any opportunity of lessening the number of their enemies.

I racked my brain and tore at my hair; for should I fail to make that God-given contact then, how long a time would pass before I could find another? And time just then was worth, perhaps, a whole mine of little green stones.

The señhores perhaps do not understand how easy it is for a man who knows the jungles and who wants to hide in them to remain forever hidden. But, believe me, you might camp along our rivers for a year and I be within five hundred meters of you all the time, and you would never know it. So I, knowing old Pacheco's cunning, lay in futile frenzy while the darkness closed—and the darkness, when it once begins to fall in those jungles of the equator line, falls with the speed of a falling blanket.

I was still cursing the irony of the circumstances when it fell. And with the immediate voices of the night, I, who knew some of the ways of the jungle, could hear the voice of the jungle—laughing at me. And those others, under the safe cover of the dark, crawled all wet and muddy from their water trench and laughed at me too. But to them I said:

"Laugh on, fools. Laugh on. You are very clever at stealing maps from a boy who used not to know anything of the jungles; and very clever at finding green stones to hoodwink a man who has no excuse not to know better. But you are not clever enough to know that the jungle is laughing at you even more than at me. A good joke on me this is for you to laugh at. Better almost than the joke of the green stone that you sold me for a *conto* and a half of *milreis*. But I make you a present of the warning that the jungle is even now preparing to extend that joke onto you. I make you a present also of your lives. They are for the jungle to attend to at its own will."

With that I left them to their own devices, to chew upon my warning and to be as miserable as I could hope. I went back to my own *batelão;* and with the first dawning I returned down stream to the mouth of the Kerary and sent one of my men to carry my carved stick to Yapu Ua. And he, having had fair dealing with me in the past, sent a sub chief bearing his carved stick to me with the message that his *moloca* was where it had been before. So I went up and made the ceremony of dipping the *mandioca* bread in the red hot chili stew with him; and when the women had taken away the dish I spoke.

"*Hath-the á pure*, Yapu the father of Ua," I said to him in the formal greeting. And he answered—

"*Hath-the a bime, Kariwa.*"

After which conversation could proceed. And I asked him:

"Your men hunt as far as two days up the Kerary. Tell me, then, what is this tale of shooting with a rifle at the camp of those white men, and why have you not killed them already?"

A very cunning old chief was Yapu, and he grinned and told me, answering after the Indian fashion the last question first.

"*Kariwa*, White Chief," he said, "my young men indeed hunt on this side of the river for two days up and more, for they are strong runners. But the farther bank, where the digging is, is the country of the Bahuana; so those strangers belong to them; and we have no desire to make a feud with the Bahuana over what is theirs by right. Yet, since the Bahuana *molocas* are far away, the strangers made a trade with my young men, paying knives and salt and fish hooks for their labor. Therefore I sent a message to the chiefs of the Bahuana, making an agreement with them that they should not kill those men as long as they paid my people the things we need. When they cease to pay, my word is that I send a swift messenger to the Bahuana, delivering them over with all the rest of their goods. And the Bahuana, desiring no feud with my young men, who are many and strong, agreed to this agreement."

"Oho," said I. "Some such thing I might have guessed. Now tell me of those other men who make war upon the strangers

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out of your country; and why have you not killed them?"

"We have not killed these," said Yapu, "because there is a *jurupary* man, a devil doctor of the Tucana people, who has sent messages through voices speaking out of the dark saying that he has a private war with those strangers. So we do not hunt him; particularly since he is very clever at concealment, hiding sometimes on this side of the river, sometimes on the Bahuana side. Yet my young men, who are brave, spying upon him, report that he has with him a white man."

So I laughed out loud in the gladness of my heart. Here was the proof. Who would the cunning fellow be but old Pacheco, and who could the white man be but Billee the gringo? So here they were, that clever scamp, Pacheco, and Billee, who had come into the jungles a tenderfoot. Under that master hand my Billee, it seemed, had grown to be a true son of the jungle, and was in a fair way to regain possession of his digging without any assistance of mine.

"BUT, *picaro*," I said to myself. "since the fool escaped with his life and was able at least to travel, why in the name of the Green One did he not steal a canoe from some jungle chief and come down river to me to get assistance in recapturing our mine, instead of going off like a mad man to wage a single-handed warfare against those robbers?"

Yet I was forced to give him a good mark for his accursed independence. That was Billee all over. Exactly as he had been prepared to tackle the whole jungle all by himself when he first came to me; so he was now determined to regain his digging without aid. Proof positive of his identity. Who else would be such a princely fool? The more so since my suspicion about that digging for green stones in a clay bank was growing in my mind as fast as Billee himself had grown.

So I gave Yapu Ua a machete of Collins with a wire handle and said to him—

"That white man is my friend. Give me now two of your best hunters that we go into the jungle to look for him without loss of time."

So I left my *batelão* with the half of my crew in the *igarapé*, the creek which runs below Yapu's moloca, and went with the hunters to hunt for the trail of Billee.

But what a fruitless hunting that was. Truly was Pacheco a master; and it very soon became evident to me that in spite of his clever pretense at being a devil doctor and his bold message to the jungle tribes, he was trusting them not at all. To hunt for a marked fish in the Amazon is a saying amongst us Brazilians. But to hunt for a man in the jungle is an equal task. Where the inner jungle stretches no man knows how far, and where today's lushy growth covers yesterday's trail, and where one must hew a road with machetes to travel ten miles a day, how is one to find a man who knows how to hide?

More than once those uncanny hunters of the Desana found where the camp had been. But it was always three or four days since it had been deserted. Aimlessly we toiled and sweated in that moist dimness of the under jungle where the sun never reaches, yet where the heat is as of a bath. As for me, I am a river man, I am no crawler upon my belly amongst the ticks and the wood lice. Fever began to come upon me and my stomach turned against meat.

In the meanwhile time was going relentlessly on. But with this new suspicion of mine about that digging in the clay bank time was assuming a lesser importance than I had given it at first. So when the hunters at last showed me a tree of a rare species which stood by the side of a jungle trail, I was willing to call a halt to this aimless wandering. *Ingapu*, the tree was called. I knew of the name. The message tree, it means, and it is used by the jungle tribes as a sort of post office. For the bark of it is almost white and it is an outstanding mark in the jungle. In it they leave signs and strange patterns of twisted *liana* vines, the meaning of which other Indians understand.

"Here," the hunters of Yapu told me, "that devil doctor is in the habit of leaving sometimes a present for the chief."

So I said to myself, "Good." And I I wrote a letter and tied it in a waterproof wrapping of the *puna* bark and placed it within the little house that the Indians make in such trees. Presently this jungle runner of mine would find it and would come to me. In the meanwhile I would go back and wait in the comfort of my *batelão* safely tied up in the creek below the *moloca* of Yapu. Let those two bandits dig away in the clay

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bank, I said to myself, and I laughed. For my suspicion about that digging was that I was beginning to see another angle of this most elaborate jest that the jungle was conducting.

I have told the señhores about the paucity of names in these upper rivers of ours. It is the same in all pioneer countries, is it not? One finds within a few days travel the same name recurring, sometimes a little different, sometimes not changed at all. And I had a memory of that German *scientifico* as a man who, while wasting his life in a fruitless study, was filled with the terrible thoroughness of his people and was no fool to go running off his head, writing a map of finding treasure, unless he were very sure about that treasure. So I was able to laugh as I remembered that while the Rio Kerary was here, there was a creek seven days journey further up called Igarapé Kerary. And I wrote thus—

"Fool," I said. "I have important news for you about this Kerary. I wait at the *moloca* of Yapu."

And I went back to wait in the comfort of my *batelão*, where my hammock rope would not be gnawed by wood rats in the night and where the insects that I ate with my food were such as I was accustomed to.

And what a tale it was that met me upon my arrival at the *moloca*!

THE Rio Kerary, where it had been polluted with the soil from the washing, was polluted now with blood. A big *batelão* had come up crammed with men, old Yapu told me; and these men had gone up the river silently and had made sudden war upon the two first white men. And those two white men were dead, as were all their Indians. Also—and Yapu's face became suddenly ferocious as he told me—three men of the Desana who stood guard round the camp had been killed by the indiscriminate shooting.

I clicked my tongue after the Indian manner to denote sympathy. Old Yapu clucked back and said that it was indeed a pity for the families of those men; but his face remained fierce. But my sympathy had been for those white men who now held the camp, for these Desana, as I have said, do not forgive killings.

The laugh that came to me stuck in my throat as I began to observe the manner of the jungle in making its grim jest. First upon that German *scientifico*, whom, having permitted to discover its treasure and almost to escape, it slew at long distance. Then upon Billee the gringo, who followed the *scientifico* and who barely escaped with his life. Then upon the two who had stolen Billee's map, and, lacking knowledge of the upper rivers, had gone up the first stream of the name of Kerary that they came to and at the seventh bend of the stream had commenced a fruitless digging in a bank of clay. Then upon me, to whom they had sold a piece of a beer bottle for a *conto* and a half of *milreis*. Then again with swift justice upon those two, whom Dom Luis and his gang, for the sake of that green bottle glass, had put beyond reach of any vengeance of mine.

I had been able to laugh with the jungle hitherto as I saw one after another of the points of its jest, even when one of them touched me. But this thing frightened me. How was I to know whether I had served my full turn in the fun making, or whether the jungle was still reserving me in its net for a butt? So I remained uneasy while I waited for Billee to come. I was anxious to hurry away from that place, clear of the area of the net.

And in a very few days it became clear to me that I was far from clear. Instead of Billee came a hunter of the Desana with a piece of cardboard from a cartridge wrapper, which he said the hand of a devil, reaching out of nowhere, had thrust into his hand while a voice told him to carry it swiftly to the white man who stayed at the *moloca* of Vapu Ua. He had been almost afraid of carrying the bewitched thing. But his fear of throwing it away had been greater than his fear of carrying it. So he brought it to prove that he was a very brave warrior.

So I gave him a kitchen knife and then read the letter. Something after this manner had Billee written:

Thanks, you old mighty good scout. Mighty nice for you to come after me. I *know* the news about the Kerary. Those fatherless ones have jumped our claim. So I'm off to shoot the —— out of them. Come on *muito pronto* and bring plenty cartridges— And for the sake of St. Mike, some clothes. BILLEE.

P. S. Pacheco says: "*Unga irapu. Puranga yarula nge.*"

The Green One ride on him for that. Was such a mountain of madness ever heard of before? Here was I, with equipment and

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men, ready to steal away quietly from all that turmoil and to go hunting for our green stones with the boy under the wing of my experience. And there was he, somewhere in the deeps of the jungle, filled with all the hot independence of youth that knew it all and needed no advice.

"*Cremento*," said I to myself. Was this my Billee of the pink-and-white face and the innocent eyes, whom I had toiled so far to render assistance to? Or had the jungle bewitched him and turned that crazy spirit of his into the body of some other man, some hard old wanderer of the waste places?

The only saneness in all this insanity was the postscript of old Pacheco. Written out according to the sound in English it was. But I was able to understand it to mean:

"He is not mad. He is a good son of the jungle."

That at least was evidence of the jungle miracle which I had suspected. But I was disappointed in the boy. Here was I, after a most arduous travel of two months to avenge his death—and found that he was by no means dead. Then I had spent a most uncomfortable period in the sweat-and-insect bath of the inner jungle to save his life from the manifold dangers that lurked there—and found that he was apparently very well able to take care of his own life. And as for rendering him assistance to save our mine—*carramba*, no sooner had I found him than he rushed off to risk his life single-handed battling with those cutthroats over a wortless bank of clay.

Verily a superb joke. But I had gone past the place where I could laugh at it any more. A terror of this thing was growing upon me. I had thought that I had served my turn. But we were not out of it yet, Billee and I. This was no infant's play that that wild youth had pitted himself against. A camp of some eight cutthroats with sundry Indians was a different matter from two scared men. There were plenty to guard camp while others, hard men and killers, scouted the jungles to find one lone white man who made war upon them with all the assurance of an army.

How I cursed him for a fool! It was desperately necessary that I find him now and tell him how much of a fool, before the jungle should conceive the further humor of letting one of his enemies do so first. But, *carramba*, what was I to do? The jungle, while it might well have made a whole man out of an inexperienced boy, could not suddenly put a grown man's foresight into the hot head of youth. My fool, in his eagerness to dash off to the rescue of his claim, had omitted to leave his new address. Was I to go off once more, crawling on my belly through all the jungles of Kerary, hunting for this maniac who hid from his enemies with all the skill that the jungle and Pacheco had taught him?

YET what else? We had escaped with our lives under the impending shadow of this joke for long enough, and I was filled with a horrid fear of lingering under such a grim humor any longer. So with rage in my heart as well as fear, I took my *batelão* and set forth. But I was no fool to go crawling and hewing a road through the inner jungle all the way to the digging, like that crazy young man of mine did. I went up the river in my boat as I had done before; only with this precaution—that I sent a man in a light canoe half an hour in front of me all the way. For it is by precaution that a man keeps alive in the upper rivers.

So I came without hurt to a tiny creek below the digging; and there I hid my *batelão* and took two of my men and went into the jungle to crawl about in the muck till I should meet my fool. And I sent two other men to scout on the other side of the river to catch him and bring him to me; for how should I know from where he would conduct his war?

But I chose the lower side myself, the side across the river from the camp, from where he had so successfully shot at me. And there I crept and climbed and sweated for days, just like any other creeping thing of the jungle.

There was but one sign that I could hope for; and presently it came to me—a rifle shot. I was almost able to be glad; but I knew too much to be sanguine. Half a mile away I judged it. Not more; for a shot, muffled and shut in amongst those vast trees, would scarcely carry further. Yet half a mile through the undergrowth at the feet of those same trees meant half an hour of strenuous and cautious crawling.

Was anybody but a fool going to fire a shot at a camp full of armed men and then wait in the same place for half an hour to let an enemy come and find him? Which,

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of course, was just what they were desperately trying to do. More than once during the following days as I lay in the jungle fringe watching that digging across the river, I would hear a shot somewhere to the right or to the left of me, and would see with satisfaction the scurry of men as they ducked for shelter. Not very often; for the place was now a fortified camp with earthworks thrown up for protection. It was seldom that a man showed. But when one did, a ball would come whizzing out of the long distance of nowhere and the man would jump in the air and run for his life—or sometimes drop out of sight.

What the damage was, I could not tell. But it was pleasingly clear to me that those robbers were having a most unhappy time. More than once a canoe full of raging men would dash across the river and plunge cursing into the underbrush on our side. More than once, as I scrambled in the direction of the latest shooting, I heard the blundering of inexpert men floundering about in the undergrowth.

It would have been easy to creep upon these and take them by surprise. But to what good? Though I had no reason to be lenient with any one of Dom Luis' cutthroats, I could not feel it my duty to kill them for wearing themselves out digging in a clay bank where there were no green stones of any sort. And as for protecting Billee against them. Pouf, I knew that those blunderers could never come upon this new Billee of the jungles any more than they could upon me.

So I left those clumsy seekers to go hunting after ghostly rifle shots as best they might; and I spent my own days amongst the insects and the jungle cats and such vermin. And at the last I found him, of course.

It was in this wise: I was crawling with all the precaution that my experience knew towards the place where I had heard the last shot, when a hiss like the deadly warning of the *jararaca* sounded suddenly close to my ear.

"*Em cima os maos!*"

One does not argue with a whisper like that within two feet of one's head. I put them up, of course, without argument. And then the rifle barrel that thrust at me out of the foliage was followed by a face which hung suspended bodiless in the dense greenery. A gaunt face, seamed by hunger and tanned Indian-brown by exposure, bearded like a jaguar and with eyes of equal menace.

I must leave you to imagine my shame, señhores. That I, Theophilo, should have permitted myself to be caught at such a disadvantage was a disgrace that will stand as a black mark against my woodcraft. There was poor comfort that I was moving while the other had lain still, for it should have been my business to detect the other's movement before he detected mine. To my great shame it was that the reverse had been the case. Yet there *was* some comfort in that face. It was the face of a hard, alert man, keen to think and quick to act. The face of a man who had lived through much and had profited much by the living and who now knew more than just much. To that face I said—

"I suppose you must be Billee the gringo. But—"

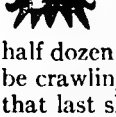
But the whole of the man crashed out from his concealment and fell upon my neck.

"Theophilo!" he shouted. "Why, you —— old ruffian!" And he swore at me affectionately after the manner of the gringos while he shook my hand and would not leave go and called me by disreputable names. Till at last he stopped to shout his laughter and—

"Look, Pacheco," he crowed. "Look at who it is who came crawling so slyly, thinking to catch us unawares."

And in the next instant the shrewd monkey face of old Pacheco grinned out at me from the opposite side where he had lain in wait. And I, I was so overcome that in the fulness of my heart, in spite of the shame of my capture, I disengaged a hand from Billee's and, Indian though he was, I shook hands with the old scamp warmly—which was a tale that he recounted with pride later to all the Indians of Yapu Ua.

But here was Billee, capering in his nakedness—for the thorny *lianas* of the jungle had left him little more than his boots—and shouting again his exuberant abuse of me. I laid my hand swiftly over his mouth.



"NAME of a saint," I warned. "Has the madness not left you yet? They will hear you across the river—to say nothing of the half dozen at least of our enemies who must be crawling about in the muck looking for that last shot."

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But he growled in his throat and his eyes became fierce on the instant as he said:

"May the —— eat them. Now that you are here, what do those babes in the woods matter? They will never find us in a hundred years. Besides, we are now three. It is enough. Of those robbers six are left—perhaps five, I am not sure. I don't like this skulking in the jungle making a long distance war. I am ready. We can clean out that camp in one afternoon."

There spoke the old Billee. There was the same old confidence of youth and carelessness of odds. But that was all that was left of the old Billee to recognize. There was nothing of pink and white skin to gladden the eye; nothing more of foolish innocence. The same fire remained perhaps in his eyes; but it was a deeper set flame, riper and with hard purpose behind the hot spark. I looked at him, and—

"Jungle man," said I to him. "It looks to me that you need no assistance of mine to clean out that robber nest. You have grown up to be a man worthy of the upper rivers. But you are still a fool. Come away from here and be sane. Come to my *batelão* and let me tell you how great a fool you are."

So, though he demurred, I hissed softly for my two men who followed me and we crept away from that none too safe place. Five of us; and I took it as a credit that we made less noise than any single one of those "babes in the wood," as this scornful Billee called them, who hunted all round us for all that shooting and shouting.

In my *batelão* I first fed those two hungry wanderers and found clothes for them; and then, rolling tobacco in a strip of *puranâ* bark, I gave it to Billee and said—

"Now listen."

And I told him the whole tale of this jest that the jungle was playing with ourselves as counters; and I finished with the tale of my suspicion about the digging in the clay bank.

"Look you," I said. "I am no geologist; and you are but a botanist, like that other fool of a *scientifico* whom the jungle used for the starting of this thing. Yet I have a memory of having heard that green stones are found, not in clay but in gravel. I have also a memory that this *igarapé* called Kerary, where it comes into the Uaupes seven days from here, forms a long sand spit—which in my estimation means a gravel country somewhere up that *igarapé*. Now tell me swiftly your judgment."

He thought for a while, brooding with his chin upon his brown fist, while little fires lit in his eyes, which grew hard and then far away and then eager. And then he spoke his thought.

"What I think is that I have been a fool as great even as Theophilo, and even more hasty; for I, too, should have known about this foolish clay pit as soon as I saw it. I hate to leave a war unfinished. Yet—I have learnt many things about the jungle in these past months, and many more in the past hour— So—let the jungle attend to its own killing, say I; and let us get out from under this joke as fast as possible and go up to the *igarapé* called Kerary, out of which I will at last wrest those green stones which I have so hardly earned."

WHAT more is to tell? I embraced my friend, resurrected out of the jungle; and without more delay we poled out of our hiding and sped away from that place of the ill-omened jest. I set my paddle men to bend to their paddles to make the *moloca* of Yapu Ua in the same day; for from Yapu I needed a passport.

That cunning old chief we found bloated with all the importance of international diplomacy. Messengers were passing in haste between him and the Bahuana tribes of the upper side, making new treaties about the disposal of these latest victims who had been lured into the net to make sport for the jungle. His position had been very much strengthened, he told me with a grinning satisfaction. For since these strangers had killed three of his men, he had now a legitimate feud against them which the Bahuana would have to recognize in the division of their goods. And he added further, as a master of finance, that he was charging these new people twice as much for the labor of diggers. No less than four ounces of salt per day, or three fish hooks.

I crossed myself.

"God rest their souls," said I. And to Yapu Ua—"This matter is between you and the Bahuana—and the jungle. I am rid of it. Give me now a young man who will be your mouth. For I journey into the country of the Bahuana and I require your word to say that Theophilo has

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nothing to do with those other white men and he deals fairly."

And he scratched his leg with his foot and said:

"It is true. You have always dealt fairly. I will give you my brother's son, who is a good mouth."

And so it was that at last we got out from the net of that grimmest of jests. And during the following days as we swung up river to the beat of eight strong paddles, I was at last able to laugh again. And why not? For the sun was hot on the water and the breeze was cool in our faces and my Billee sat in the prow, resurrected out of the jungle and grown to be a whole man and my full partner.

At the Kerary *igarapé*, two days up and at the seventh bend, just as the map had said, there was a great gravel bank. So that German *scientifico* had spoken truth. And there I established Billee in camp and said to him:

"Take your 'mouth' to the chiefs of the Bahuana and collect your men and sit here and dig. As for me, I have urgent business which I have too long neglected for this wasteful trip to rescue you who needed no rescuing. I leave my partnership interest in hands as good as my own. Jungle man, I salute you."

So I embraced him and came away; and as I passed by the *moloca* of Yapu Ua, I noticed that the men of the tribe had many knives and machetes, and the women, who used to be naked, wore girdles of cloth which looked as though it might be tent cloth.

So then I knew that the jungle had completed its jest.

And now, señhores, now that it is all over, and Billee and I have escaped out of the net of that jest, I am beginning to be able to laugh at it once more. For there was a certain justice in that jest of the Jungle.

And so I sit here, drinking the cool water of the *pupunha*, and expecting every day now to see coming down the river a fast canoe, paddled by such men as Pacheco knows how to select; and to see, seated in the canoe like a very king of the jungle who knows his country, my friend Billee, bringing many green stones at least as big as this piece of a beer bottle for which I paid a *conto* and a half.

But to you, señhores, who used to know Billie the tenderfoot, I shall have to point him out. For you would never know him.

SHIP'S LOG

by Harold Willard Gleason

HID from the greed of roving eyes,
Snug in the clipper's locker lies
A thick black ledger, whose pages hold,
Scrawled in syllables cramped and cold
By a spluttering pen in a sea-warped fist,
Phrase laconic and humdrum list,
Sounding, latitude, sighted sail,
Weather and wind, what seamen ail,
Prizes, penalties, ship-repair—
Volumes, hidden by pen-strokes bare.
Terror, tragedy, hope and rage—
Rugged Life crowds the blue-lined page.

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But who could guess, from the entry curt:
"Gale off Hatteras—three hands hurt,"
Aught of towering green-black waves;
Timbers shattered like barrel-staves;
Wind a-scream through the tattered sail,
And black sky dread with the lightning pale;
Shifting cargo and ragged shore;
Mike the Lascar to walk no more,
His hip-bone smashed in a dizzy fall
When a yard-arm snapped in a sudden squall;
Olsen mute with a crushed-in jaw
From a gale-whipped sheet-end he scarcely saw;
And Jones, three-finger-less, crazed with pain,
Lashed to his bunk, to scream in vain?

Who, in "Hoff broken—Gadd made mate,"
Ever could see the fiendish hate
'Twixt two strong men, that neither voiced,
But each in the other's pain rejoiced;
Flash of a knife, and a shirt stained dark
As insult fired wronged manhood's spark;
The flush of gladness akin to shame
When a youth heard "Mister" before his name,
Banishing bitterness, anguish, fears,
All the throes of his 'prentice years?

Never a volume treasured, rare,
Could, if the truth were known, compare
With the stirring epics of mighty deed,
Crammed in the entries of labored screed,
By the ship's-log writer's prosaic pen
In the glorious days of merchantmen!

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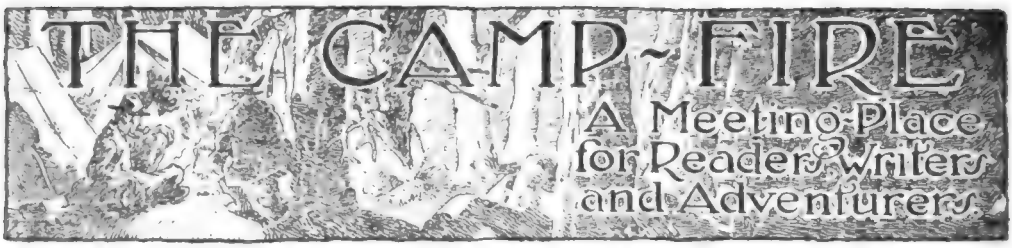

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

SEEMS to me some one did give some information on Kit Carson's family, but I can't be sure. Anyhow, here's something about Kit Carson:

Visalia, California.

An item, a number of years ago, in a California newspaper regarding the sale of a piece of land once owned by a relative of the great Kit Carson caused me to apply to "Camp-Fire" for information regarding his family history, but no one "kicked in."

I RECENTLY had a wau-wau with an old-timer who was a close friend of Alex Gowdie (I spell the name as he pronounced it), the French Canadian companion of Carson. Alex, in the late '50s, settled in the southern part of this county, going into the sheep business, and died but a few years ago in the adjoining county, south. Alex said that Kit Carson had at least one brother, Mose, and that Mose "viculated" about as much as did Kit and was really a better scout than Kit, but that Kit was "made" by Fremont's praise and, to make all even, that Kit "made Fremont." Mose was different from Kit in that he would drink and raise ——, generally, Kit being very quiet and sober. My old-timer friend remembers Kit Carson coming back to California in 1853 or '54, bringing sheep in from his home near Taos, New Mexico, as the California market for mutton was excellent.

I can get no line on any other members of the Carson family except a very handsome Spanish appearing woman who "came on the town" here in the '60s, who went by the name of Kit Carson and claimed to be the daughter of the great Kit.

Gowdie, a great talker if given a good listener, made most of Kit's ability to go long spells without rest. Said he knew of many instances when Kit would cross the major part of a territory alone, traveling nights and hiding out by day and practically without sleep, for fear of Indians picking up his trail made a day watch a necessity. Said that Kit would always travel alone by preference unless he could choose a companion in whom he had the utmost confidence.

One incident, mention of which I have seen several times, when after an Indian raid and massacre Carson and Gowdie went alone after the Indians, cleaned them up fairly well and returned with a large herd of stolen horses, was explained by Alex. He said he and Kit volunteered expecting "plenty company," as a large number of men were present, but when no more offered services they went alone rather than "back down."'

I secured this much reliable data on the Carson kin in running down the history of a Colt revolver. The possessor claimed that it was once a favorite of Carson's. I could hardly credit the claim but the

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old-timer I finally interviewed said it might well have come through Gowdie, who was undoubtedly very close to Carson in the days long past.—G. L. CHESTER.

SOMETHING more on the "lightning draw" of the old-timers. I used to sort of puzzle quite a bit over those miracle-workers in fiction who habitually—and without any apparent reason other than to show off—waited till the other fellow had drawn and begun pressing the trigger before they even started going after a gun. It always gave them plenty of time somehow and, to the best of my knowledge, none of them ever failed of a perfect aim.

They did this so often that I began to look for further improvements. A *really* quick man on the draw, one whose father, say, had made him practise eight hours a day ever since he was four years old, could wait till the other fellow's bullet was well on the way and then, with one of those "lightning draws," could with his first shot stop the hostile bullet in mid-air and with his second could bore the other fellow neatly between the eyes and nonchalantly watch him crumple with the usual and quite natural look of surprize on his face.

And quite possibly sooner or later this magazine will get careless and print a story with one of these miraculous lightning draws in it, as we've probably done in the past. Luckily for our reputation, as the present discussion shows, it's not easy to draw the exact line at which a quick draw turns into an impossibility.

Ft. Meyer, Virginia.

Guess you didn't intend to start an argument as to the old-time gunman when you published the Mullikin and Reese letters, but I just want to say that I sure do hold with Mr. Reese. I sure don't doubt Mr. Mullikin's word about his friends' ability with a "six gun," but I do believe that he is laboring under a delusion as to the time.

IF YOU want to get right down to the actual facts, consult Mr. J. A. McGuire. He has made extensive tests and experiments on the subject and can give you proven, *timed* results. Also Mr. Reese is correct in saying that Chauncey Thomas is one of the best authorities in the country on the old "single action." Ashley A, Haines, also has the rights on his .45 single action 7½. A. A. H. is an old timer and I believe that he will back up Mr. Reese's statements as to the "lightning draw" of the old timers. It's *Bunk*. See some of Bill Hart's movies sometimes and you will see the real thing; especially if you can see the picture "Wild Bill Hickok."—JAMES E. MCNEIL, Btry A, 16th F. A.

SOMETHING from Talbot Mundy concerning the facts, legends and opinions back of his complete novel in this issue. Maybe you'd better read the story before you read this, since it indicates some of the important developments of the tale.

There is a host of people who accept the word of Caius Julius Cæsar for everything he has written in his commentaries; personally, I regard them as the extremely able propaganda of a man who had brains and who stopped at nothing to accomplish his ambition. Cæsar was at war on several fronts and at home as well; he not only had to defeat desperate enemies in the field, but to satisfy the Roman republic that his methods and campaigns were justified. In other words, he had to play politics as well as war.

BROADLY speaking, our modern theory that the word of a demonstrably vicious and dishonest man should not be taken (in a court of law, for instance) without strong corroboration, is probably sound enough. If it can be shown that a witness or defendant has habitually accepted and received bribes, that he has a motive for making certain statements, and that his private life is thoroughly corrupt, the odds are that a jury will decide against him. In studying Cæsar, I have tried to take the attitude of jury. I began with a strong prejudice in his favor, and have ended—after reading everything about him I can find—with a verdict of guilty on all points and a rider to the effect that he seems to have been the ablest, most charming, gentlemanly and dangerous cynic who ever lived.

It may be that his character was twisted to the left by epilepsy, from which he suffered with increasing frequency. But, according to one account at any rate he was smart enough to use the epilepsy to his own advantage. It is said that on more than one occasion, when faced by superior enemy forces, he feigned epilepsy in order that one of his generals should be obliged to conduct the battle and take the blame in the event of loss; that general succeeding, however, Cæsar recovered in time to accept credit for the victory. If true, that would be quite in keeping with Cæsar's character. He was above all else clever, an opportunist and a cynic.

AS FOR the Druids, in these stories I have tried to provide a glimpse of what the Druids really were. It is the custom among historians to describe them as bloodthirsty and superstitious pagans, addicted to human sacrifice. Nevertheless, those same historians appear to agree that most history (even modern history) is largely based on legend, and that nearly all legend has its foundation in truth. There is far more legendary basis for believing that the Druids were splendid mystics than for the contrary more commonly accepted theory. Study, for instance, the mass of Irish and Welsh legend regarding them.

The Druids died out from beneath, not from above. They were a hierarchy recruited from among aspirants for initiation into their mysteries, which included a knowledge of science, all the arts, astronomy and, above all, the secret of the meaning of life. A time came when no recruits were forthcoming

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who could pass the ordeal of initiation. The hierarchy died out. Their successors were mere first, second, third degree men, probably anxious to impress the world with their own importance and therefore increasingly willing to adopt materialistic methods; and so the high order of Druids fell on evil days.

Quite possibly, toward the latter end of druidism, bloodthirsty and superstitious practises crept in—just as in far later "dark ages" Christianity adopted burning at the stake, torture and crusading under arms as substitutes for spiritual thinking and nobility of mind. But in this connection it should be noticed that Cæsar (and all those who have used Cæsar's Commentaries as basis for their theories regarding Druids) accuses the Druids of cruelties of exactly the same nature that Cæsar himself perpetrated.

The fact is that the Druids taught and practised conduct so exactly opposite to Cæsar's that, in order to justify himself, he slew them and accused them of being unfit to live in a "civilized" world—which it may be they were not; there is a story of a crucifixion in Jerusalem, the victim of which was also considered, by the Romans, unfit to live. It has always been, and apparently still is considered good politics to accuse the opponent of one's own shortcomings.

The attitude of Celts, even today, toward teachers ministers and any whom they regard as their intellectual superiors (even though they may disagree with them in theory) is in practise more than suggestive of the nature of the druidic control. It is probably almost impossible to exaggerate the strength of the druidic influence.

AS FOR the Britons, I know nothing against them Except that they invented trousers, an infliction on posterity for which, I think, they fully deserve the fate the Romans inflicted on their island.

They were certainly not barbarians, as Cæsar tries to make them out to be (except in that matter of trousers. The Romans knew how to dress sensibly and with dignity, so that possibly the trousers are the origin of all the absurd legends about British barbarism).

Historians disagree about Lunden Town, as I have said before. Some say it was there in those days, some say not. Personally, I have no doubt there was a town there in Caswallon's day. Like most cathedrals in Europe, St. Paul's almost certainly stands on the site of a pagan place of worship. Nearly all historians will find fault with my placing Scandinavian raids on Britain—and "Northmen" in Britain—as early as 55 B. C. *Tot homines tot sententiæ*. I disagree with them. Scandinavian ships are eloquent; they could not possibly have reached that marvelous perfection of design, that admittedly they possessed in A. D. 700, without centuries of previous experience on open seas. The distance from the Baltic to Britain was as short then as now; the winds blew and the tides flowed in the same directions; Scandinavia was as cold in winter, and Britain was comparatively warm. I believe there was much more navigation in those days than is commonly supposed.

As for the origin of the Britons, read "The Origin of the English" by B. de W. Weldon (Marshall, New York.) The book is interesting, even if you don't agree with its author—as I, for instance, don't, excepting here and there. The best of him is that he breaks the molds of thought and turns you loose conjecturing.

THE story of the carrying off of Fflur is based on an old Welsh legend told me by Professor Kenneth Morris. Fflur, according to that legend, was carried off to Gaul by Murchan king of Gascony, and recovered by Caswallon, who invaded Gaul with sixty-one thousand men (a sheer impossibility!). But legends are founded on fact, so I have used the legend and have imagined fact to form a basis for it.

According to the legend, Caswallon recovered Fflur but all the sixty-one thousand men remained in Gaul. It is quite sure that Cæsar would have said nothing in his Commentaries about any such dirty business as carrying off a man's wife, particularly since the project ultimately failed. On the other hand, if any such horde as sixty-one thousand had migrated to Gaul, he would almost certainly have mentioned. So I though of *Eough* and the charcoal-burners (quite imaginary people) whose exodus and failure to return, by depriving the people of Lunden for a while of convenient fuel, might have caused sufficient comment to give birth to a legend.

AS FOR *Tros'* explosives, I have consulted experts in the Bremerton Navy Yard who assure me not only that *Tros'* chemistry was possible, but that, even so, he would not be too far in advance of contemporary military engineers. Mixtures of charcoal, sulphur and ammonium nitrate were known and in use, particularly in sea-warfare, where the practise was to lay alongside an enemy ship and throw "fire" into her. Sometimes the stuff exploded sometimes not, but it stank and was almost unextinguishable. The idea of using explosives to propel a missile did not occur until centuries later.

Tros' catapult was something entirely new. Its principle resembles that of those modern electrical catapults that propel airplanes from the after deck of such ships as the *U. S. S. Maryland*. With such an engine *Tros* should easily outrange the Romans, who relied on twisted sinews for propelling power and, with their biggest engines, were limited to a range of about four hundred yards. They could hurl great weights, but to no great distance.

Tros' notion of covering his great ship's hull with tin was practical, and not so extravagant as it may seem. The cost of the material is the main objection to tin in modern practise; but *Tros* was building his ship where tin was fairly easily procurable in quantity, whereas copper (had its use occured to him) might have been harder to obtain. At any rate, the capture of a cargo of tin destined for Roman use solved the problem for him, and there seems no doubt that tin would form an almost perfect protection for the wooden hull against the action of seawater, barnacles and "borers."

I AM one of those who wish "Camp-Fire" were twice as big as the fiction part of the magazine, so there might be more room to dissertate on interesting fact and theory without crowding other fellows who have equally absorbing subjects for discussion. As it is, may I close with a word of advice? If you want to live life gorgeously and to enjoy it in any and all circumstances, give your imagination full reign. Don't believe a word historians say unless

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it gibes with common sense and modern human nature (which has not changed *much* in twenty or thirty centuries). Then form your own opinions, in your own way, change 'em just as often as new revelation dawns on you, and always—whatever comes of it—cheerfully permit the other fellow to keep or to change his, as, when, and why he sees fit. But for the love of our old friend Mike, do have opinions of your own on every subject under the sun; they're the essence of life, laughter and evolution.—TALBOT MUNDY.

AS WITH the first instalment of "Days of '49" we pass on to Camp-Fire some of the notes Gordon Young sent along with the story as being of interest in themselves. Originally intended as foot-notes, they will serve to show that the author did not draw upon his imagination in picturing the highly colored and extravagantly dramatic life of the place and period.

Chapter VIII

"Walking through the town the next day, I was quite amazed to find a dozen persons busily employed in the street before the United States Hotel, digging up the earth with knives and crumbling it in their hands. They were actual gold-hunters, who obtained in this way about $5 a day. After blowing the fine dust carefully in their hands, a few specks of gold were left which they places in a piece of white paper. A number of children were engaged in the same business, picking out the fine grains by applying them to the head of a pin, moistened in their mouths. I was told of a small boy having taken home $14 as the result of one day's labor . . . . The presence of gold in the streets was probably occasioned by the leakings from the miners' bags and the sweepings of stores."—p. 60. Taylor's "El Dorado."

Chapter IX

Some such story of a duel between the armies during the Mexican War was told of Jack Hayes, Texas Ranger, and one of the first sheriffs of San Francisco. —"Adventures of a Forty-Niner." P. 98.

Chapter X

Lieut. Revere says: "After his wife and children, the darling objects of a Californian's heart are his horses. In this respect he is not surpassed by the Arab . . . Dismount a Californian and he is at once reduced to a perfectly helpless state, and is of no use in the world The lineage of the Californian horse is undoubtedly of the purest and highest. The domestic horses of the country, as well as those immense herds of wild horses which range the vast plains of the Tulares in their primitive freedom, all derive their descent from the Andalusian horses, which so materially aided the redoubtable Conquistadores to subvert the Aztec empire . . . . This stock of course gives them a pure Arabian descent. No stabling, no grooming, no farriery, no shoeing, no docking, no clipping, no jockeying, are connected with the care of the Californian horse. After a hard day's journey he is unbridled and unsaddled, and suffered to roam at large."—"Tour of Duty in California." By Joseph Warren Revere. N. Y. and Boston. 1849. P. 104.

Edwin Bryant, who took part in the military operations in California before the discovery of gold, and who was one of the early Alcades of San Francisco, wrote, in "What I Saw in California." *London*, 1849, Chapter XV: "The men (Spanish Californians) are almost constantly on horseback, and as horsemen excel any I have seen in other parts of the world. From the nature of their pursuits and amusements, they have brought horsemanship to a perfection challenging admiration and exciting astonishment."

Chapter XIV

"In the forenoon, when gambling was slack, the gamblers would get up from their tables, and, leaving exposed upon them, at the mercy of the heterogeneous crowd circulating through the room, piles of gold and silver, they would walk away, seemingly as little anxious for the safety of their money as if it were under lock and key in an iron chest. It was strange to see so much apparent confidence in the honesty of human nature, and—in a city where violence and robberies were so rife, that, when out at night in unfrequented quarters, one walked pistol in hand in the middle of the street—to see money exposed in such a way as would be thought madness in any other part of the world."—"The Gold Hunters." By J. D. Borthwick. Edinburgh. 1857. Chapter III.

"To facilitate the course of justice, the governor appointed William B. Almond judge of first instance, with civil jurisdiction. Almond was a man of coarse manners and had a habit of adjourning court to go out for a drink. He had been a peanut peddler and knew little about law. In hearing his cases he would sometimes listen to one or two witnesses on one side, and then cut short the attorneys of the other side, saying he wanted to hear no more."—"The Beginnings of San Francisco." 2 vol. By Zoeth Skinner Eldredge. San Francisco. 1912. Vol. ii.—p. 606.

Chapter XVI

Redmond in his "Personal Adventures" mentions the presence of the Italian musician, his hurdy-gurdy and monkey.

"Father" Taylor, a Methodist, was the famous street preacher of '49 and afterwards. He mentions particularly that the bolder and more severe a preacher was, the more he was respected and admired by the sinners. He cites the instance of the city's leading gambler giving $10 as a donation to one preacher, but $20 to another because, as the gambler put it, "he so fearlessly dealt out the truth against gamblers." "A prominent characteristic of Californians generally, however wicked," says Father Taylor, is that they want a man, especially a minister of the gospel, to speak out the whole truth fearlessly, boldly, and to make thorough work of whatever he undertakes."—"California Life Illustrated." By William Taylor. N. Y. 1858. P. 53.

Again, p. 300, Father Taylor wrote: "—They are a self-reliant, independent class of men, who, in all matters of personal opinion and conduct, think and speak and do as they are inclined, and cheerfully extend the same privilege to each other and everybody else. Hence preachers of the Gospel in California's

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worst days, were permitted to preach in bar-rooms, gambling saloons, public thoroughfares, or wherever they wished, without hindrance or disturbance."

Chapter XVII

David S. Terry resigned from the Chief Justiceship of the Supreme Court to fight a duel with U. S. Senator David C. Broderick. Some years later Terry slapped the face of a Federal Judge and was instantly killed by the bodyguard of the Judge.

In 1856 the Vigilance Committee of San Francisco hanged James P. Casey for the murder of the newspaper editor, James King of William, though Casey was said to have used the words, "Draw and defend yourself," before shooting. This appears to have been the first instance of a man being held accountable for murder in anything like a personal encounter. Some colder-blooded murderers had been previously hanged.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom Charles P. Mueller rises to introduce himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine:

San Antonio, Texas.

With the opportunity to "stand up" before the Camp-Fire and tell something about myself and my adventures, it occurs to me that the latter is rather a hard bill to fill.

THE part about myself is simple and quickly enough told. I was born in San Antonio, Texas, thirty years ago. I carry 180 pounds of meat on a six-foot frame. I am happily married. I love dogs, horses, guns and pig's knuckles; despise cats, work and parsnips; enjoy music; like tobacco, and could, if necessary, give information on other more intimate topics that would, no doubt, provide a just basis for criticism, but—adventure? That is something else again.

What, really, is an adventure? We all have them every day. It is an adventure for a tenement child to spend a day in the sunshine. It is an adventure for the spinster to receive the ice-man's casual smile. It is hardly an adventure, however, for a steeple-jack to loose his hold for a moment and slip twenty feet or more to the end of his safety rope. That happens too often to him. What gives me an awful "kick" might become mere commonplace to you. So there you are.

I DO think, however, that our most important adventures, or at least those we remember best, are the ones that were impressed upon us at the time by a great fear, an unusual physical discomfort, great gobs of undesired publicity, or a matter that was ridiculously funny. On this premise, then, here goes!

My "fear" adventure came with a mis-step, a sudden plunge into the middle of Corpus Christi Bay at midnight, a cat-boat leaving me, full sail with the wind, and a helpless companion in the boat who knew as much about sailing as a grasshopper does about roller skates. I nearly drowned while trying to yell to him what to do in order to get back to me, and almost wore myself out trying to swim, clothes and all, in the directions in which he occasionally seemed to be headed. He would come about as per my orders and then as quickly jibe again. Why didn't I tell him to pull down the sail? I did. It finally occured to me and I just did make the fast drifting boat, utterly played out. I'll remember that!

"PHYSICAL discomfort" brings to mind many things. An overland trip to Florida through the Louisiana swamps, a bump on the head and empty pockets after an evening on the old "Barbary Coast" in Frisco, an evening spent at Coney Island, and sitting through a full performance given by an Italian grand opera company. But most of all it makes me remember the day my horse, a freshly broken one, got away from me nine miles from the house when I was ranching in the Devil's River country, and how I walked, ran, jumped, crawled, crept, cursed, pleaded and cajoled—and then walked nine miles in the dark.

"UNDESIRED publicity" came in Omaha. After a year and a half of flying as an officer in the American Air Service, I was taking a ship from Chicago to Denver to deliver a neatly scribed message from Mayor Thompson to the Mayor of Denver. It was in the interest of commercial aviation. As far as I know, that letter was never delivered.

I had stopped in Omaha for the night. The press was taken into my confidence. I told of the wonderful future of commercial flying. I pointed out that proper care eliminated the possibility of accidents. I orated at length on the safety of flying. They promised to run the story—and they did.

The next morning it rained. The race-track, where we had landed, was sloppy with mud. I couldn't get off with my passenger so I took off alone after arranging for him to meet me at a more favorable field. I flew around a bit and found such a field It was on a steep hill. I hovered low and saw that all was clear, then dropped into the valley below in order to land up the slope. When I reached the top again the field was no longer entirely clear. A Ford sedan had driven out to see what had become of me. It was immediately enlightened.

Of course, I couldn't stop. I tried to turn, but my speed was too far gone for the rudder to function. I didn't have room to get under power and turn. Things happened fast. I gave her the gun and pushed the stick all the way forward, hoping to throw up my tail and nose over before striking the car. Too late. *CRASH!*

The papers carried the story, pictures and all. The headlines read, "AIRPLANES MUST LEAVE FLIVVERS ALONE" and "FIRST COLLISION BETWEEN AUTO AND AIRPLANE ON RECORD." The same sheet carried my story of the night before. No more accidents! No more danger! Can you beat it?

THE "funny incident?" Oh, yes. It happened in Mexico during the trouble with our old friend Pancho Villa at Columbus. I was arrested, placed in a thin-walled 'dobe jail without bars, and guarded by a youthful native soldier carrying a Mauser rifle and twelve-guage shot-gun ammunition, who admitted haltingly that he had just been given the gun that day and didn't know how it worked. I'll have to let you imagine the rest of that, however, because I'm using the details in another story.—CHARLES P. MUELLER.

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THERE was an argument between Gordon MacCreagh and one of us on the staff concerning several points in Mr. MacCreagh's complete novelette in this issue. The argument doesn't matter and, anyhow, all I can remember about the subjects is what I infer from Mr. MacCreagh's letter that follows. But his letter is interesting and brings up some interesting questions.

New York City.

From hard personal experience I know the difficulty of carrying ammunition. At the same time I know that a man in case of need will abandon everything but his rifle and ammunition. Knowing, too, the value of conservation—from personal experience, of which later—I was careful—at least to my own thinking—not to convey any impression of "continual bombardment." *Billee* was "sniping" the gang intermittently whenever one of them showed. Consider then, how often, when a camp is being sniped, will a man show? Three, four, five times a day? Remember that the first gang put up screens of branches and the second gang, earthworks.

NOW, *Billee* sniped the first gang for two weeks before *Theophilo* arrived. He sniped the second gang for, say, another two weeks before *Theophilo* found him. He was in that country, after losing his outfit, some six months or so.

How much ammunition did he have to spare after feeding himself during this period? It will surprise you to consider how *little* has to go on grub. Here's my personal experience. I went into that country with five hundred rounds; weight, about 7½ pounds. (By no means too much for a man to pack around on his back.) I was in about five months when I lost all my reserve ammunition in an upset shooting a rapid. I was left with just under a hundred rounds, with about a year more of the jungle ahead of me. There's where I learned conservation. Even a poor shot doesn't have to miss much when he remembers all the time that he can't afford to blaze away at anything he isn't certain of, and that he can't afford to waste cartridges on dicky birds which haven't much meat on them—a three hundred-pound tapir or a two hundred-pound menatee make the most economical shooting in such a case. Well, I came out with nine rounds left—and was at no time hungry.

Suppose *Billee* had to shoot grub once a day, which is almost inconceivable. Six months, 180 cartridges. Leaving him, for one month of sniping, ten shots a day including Sundays.

SURELY the thing isn't overdone. Still, the editorial argument stands good. If it struck one of the readers that way, it might similarly strike the rest of the *million* who will read the story.

But the difficulty to me is none the less. I don't know how, if I have not made my case good, to alter the condition without rewriting the whole story.

How about settling the difficulty by running my defense in Camp-Fire—it's not uninteresting to question about the amount of shooting that a man has to do in the jungle.

Did anybody call A. O. Friel on the battle he staged against the attacking horde of the Guaharibas in the caves of the white Indians? How many men did he exterminate? And how many cartridges was it estimated that were fired during the great war to kill *one* man?

RE THE white men thinking that *Billee* was dead. Here I want to be obstinate and stick to my story. The white men came to the country *solely* because they had heard the rumour that *Billee* was dead. All Manaos thought so when the mission Indian came back with his story, and they invoked a blessing on his soul. It is plausible that the tale should have gone out to *Billee's* friends, and is the motivation for bringing them into the story—to square the account.

Why didn't *Theophilo* tell them? Because he is telling them a story. Because he is distinctly a man of dramatic mind. Because *anybody* telling a story if he has a little secret up his sleeve, will hold that suspense until the proper time.—GORDON MACCREAGH.

WERE the Aztecs Chinese and, if so, did they go from China direct or westward *via* Atlantis? And wasn't the Alexandrian library really destroyed?

Omaha, Nebraska.

At June 30th, 1924, Camp-Fire, Don P. Authen has a short contribution on the American Indian. The presence of the swastika in Asia looks as though the Indian might have been a resident of that continent. Another striking illustration is the word "Zin." South of the Dead Sea there is the wilderness of *Zin* through which the Israelites passed on their way from Egypt to Canaan in the days of Moses. In China is the word "*Tsin*" which appears in the city of Tientsin. In the Aztec empires the word was *Tzin*, with Gautamozin as the last of the Tzins.

NOW the question is how did the Aztec Indians of Mexico get hold of that word? Bible commentators think the reference to Sin-im in Isaiah 49.12 refers to the Chinese, but Gen. 10.17 evidently refers to them as Sinites, the descendants of Ham living in the land of Canaan from whence (verse 18) *they were afterward spread abroad* with other families of the Canaanites. The inquiry is: Did these Sinites go to China and thence across the Pacific to Mexico? Or did they move to the south of the Dead Sea, from whence they migrated eastward to China, as noted, with another part moving through Africa to the Atlantic coast, thence through the fabled Atlantis and South and Central America to Peru and Mexico? That the Aztecs had communication with South America is evidenced in the crown jewels of the Aztec emperor, the emeralds coming from the mines of Colombia. The Aztecs claimed a northern origin and were possibly blended with the Toltecs and older races of Mexico of unknown origin.

If, as Mr. Mundy believes, the Alexandrian Library was not destroyed by the Mohammedans, it may yet reveal the unknown history of these people and verify the story of the Egyptian priest to Plato of Atlantis and their ancestors. If my memory is correct, there are white Indians in Brazil, blue eyed Choctaws in North America and, I believe, white or partially white Manyan Indians at one time in

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Nebraska and South Dakota, possibly descended from a lost colony of Welshmten and other Indians where the colony dwelt.

Where did they all come from?—E. F. TEST.

AS TO the comparative fighting ability of different races and military formations of all time. Another comrade, writing before he could have seen the beginnings of the discussion at Camp-Fire, wants to hear opinions. And how about the shape of armor-piercing arrow-heads?

On the latter point there is valuable information in "A Study of Bows and Arrows," by Saxton T. Pope, one of the University of California publications, $1.75, already mentioned at Camp-Fire. (Address University of California Press, Berkeley, California.)

It describes one point as: "a very heavy tempered steel reamer set in steel tubing of ⅜ inch diameter by a shank and a rivet. This is almost an exact copy of the old English war bodkin point taken from the drawings made at Hastings. The entire weight of this arrow is 2½ ounces, and it represents the most formidable missile in the group under consideration. The bodkin point was devised to penetrate steel armor, and in England it supplanted the broadhead after protective devices came into general use. Such a heavy shaft can be shot only from the most powerful bows.

The blade of the head, judging from the illustration, is roughly a bit more than four times as long as its width, like a slender spear-head in shape.

Mr. Roe's letter follows:

Hibbing, Minnesota.

Two subjects have come up at the Camp-Fire lately that I would like to horn in on. One has to do with bows and arrows, and my contribution is a request for information about arrow-heads.

WHAT was the shape of the armor-piercing arrow-head shot by our ancestors at Crecy and other battles? It doesn't seem as though the conventional shape would go through mail or leather at any distance. All the heads I've ever seen were the stone ones used by the aborigines which I have picked up in Massachusetts, Minnesota and Arizona. Of course, those are not alike but have a family resemblance which I imagine is due to the materials of which they are made. But surely metal points for special war needs would be entirely different, and I wish some of our experts would tell us.

The other subject has to do with speculations on the fighting ability of different races of different times. How would one of Chaka's impis stack up against the Macedonian phalanx or other organizations of earlier or later dates? I wish some one like Santie Sabalala would tell us. From all I can find out the Zulu warriors formed as nearly perfect a war machine as would be possible without horses and armor and by their mobility and fierceness would give even the immortal Tenth Legion an interesting afternoon.—C. E. ROE.

ALSO a letter from John Preston True, a comrade who is an enthusiastic archer:

Waban, Massachusetts.

When I started in on that Brooke-Brodeur-*et al.* Camp-blaze I said: "Ye gods. They all ought to read Saxton Pope's monograph on Bows and Arrows" and learn something. Guess I'll tell 'em so. And lo! Joe Ward gets in ahead of me. Only, he's too modest about it—or, rather, his conveyed clipping was. When you get it you'll all become wiser than you now are about American Indian archery.

ABOUT distances: Pope has a chum, one Will Compton, who sort o' specializes on long-shot work. On one hunting trip he killed a deer with a single arrow at 175 yards. Somebody afterward doubted the fact, whereupon the doughty William swiveled round, picked out a small bush "about the size of a dog" 175 yards away, and drove three successive arrows through the heart of it. Exit doubter.

But:—you'd better get Pope's book, "Hunting with the Bow and Arrow," published by James H. Barry Co., Mission St., San Francisco, Calif., 1923. I paid $3.25 for mine—including postage.

It's in thirds. 1. Biography of an Indian chief, last of his tribe, whom Pope rescued from starvation and who gratefully told him a lot of Indian hunting lore worth study, being authentic.

2. The making and use of an outfit, *practical* technique.

3. The story of the trip for museum purposes, of Pope, Compton and Arthur Young, after grizzly bears, under contract to bring out a whole family, skins and skeletons. They did—from the Big Un weighing over half a ton—down. Incidentally, in three trips they brought out 30 deer, and never lost a wounded one. How many riflemen can say as much?

I think you have already noted that Pope and Young are to accompany Stewart Edward White, the author, to Africa this spring. White has become a bow-convert, too; and already ranks rather high in our weekly score-bulletins.—JOHN PRESTON TRUE.

FROM an Australian comrade comes a newspaper clipping telling how Lady Richmond Brown and Mitchell Hedges visited the Chucunaque Indians in southern Panama, a pre-stone-age people never before visited by white people and living in a "secret" territory, and made the Indians believe they were gods or spirits by setting off red fires, as told in Lady Richmond Brown's book "Unknown Tribes, Uncharted Seas." A newspaper digest of a book's contents does not make the best of data to judge from and you have only my digest of the newspaper's

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digest, but I think I've correctly quoted the main statements.

Anyhow, will those who know "give us the low-down" on the Chucunaque Indians and their susceptibility to fireworks?

Everton Park, *via* Brisbane,
Queensland, Australia.

Now, what do you Camp-Fire members know about that? They might have frightened a mob of Caribee children that way, but not a mob of full grown Chucunaque Indians. I met a few of those Indians when I was knocking around the Isthmus of Panama three years before the U. S. started to dig the Canal and I found some of them better educated than I was. Otherwise, if they were so superstitious and cowardly, how did they manage to keep the Spaniards from seizing the country and making slaves of them, and also how have they managed to keep the white man from entering their country ever since, considering that they have known the white man and been dealing and trading with him for near on to 300 years?

Anyway, pass it up to Camp-Fire and some of the tropical tramps around Panama and Colon and see what they have to say about it.—ANDERSON F. BARNETT.

TAKEN FOR A GODDESS

CHEATED WITH RED FIRE

It is a thrilling story that Lady Richmond Brown tells of the discovery of the Chucunaque Indians, in Central America—one of the most dramatic ever told by a woman explorer. It is told in her most interesting book, "Unknown Tribes, Uncharted Seas."

The Chucunaque regarded her and Mr. Mitchell Hedges—they explored together—as god-like messengers from the "great spirits." She records an extraordinary spectacle of "magic" by which they impressed the strange tribe with her unearthly powers.

The Chucunaque are said to be a pre-stone-age tribe. No white people ever visited them before.

Lady Richmond Brown and Mr. Mitchell Hedges left Panama in a motor launch to search for the tribe.

They were piloted by Indians from the San Blas Islands to the secret territory of the Chucunaque, hidden away on the mainland, in the direction of Colombia. The country was "forbidden."

The trail ended suddenly, and they were in the unknown Chucunaque. They were met by four headmen, carrying sticks of office, with carved emblematical figures on top.

"They uttered not a single word of greeting," writes Lady Richmond Brown, "the four headmen and the two contoolie walking ahead of us, while armed Indians closed in behind."

So they came to the village. Here they were led to the chief's house.

For a time there was silence. Then the chief gave the greeting word, "Nveddee," as used by the San Blas Indians.

After a death-like silence, the chief demanded that they should demonstrate that they were actually spirits sent to heal the tribe, and not mortals.

"THE GREAT SPIRITS"

The silence was ended by Mr. Mitchell Hedges' rising and explaining "in a voice like thunder":—"We, the healers, will confer with the great spirits, and make known to them what you have said, though we know not what the result will be."

He ordered that at nightfall the whole village should stand before the hut alloted to him and Lady Richmond Brown.

Half an hour after darkness, the people stood in terror in front of the hut. Mr. Hedges and Lady Richmond Brown stole out of their hut, planted red flares—which they had brought from Panama—all around, and lay flat. They lit the flares.

The effect was startling, it is said, and my eyes were dazzled with the burst of red flame. Volumes of lurid smoke swirled upwards, amid which we rose, standing perfectly still and silent, with the red clouds enveloping us.

The whole population, except dozens of helpless invalids, fled with a yell.

SOMETHING about garrapatas, niguas and chiggers. A letter from Tracy Richardson, who needs no introduction at Camp-Fire or any other place where are gathered those who know today's frontiersmen. Or machine-gunners.

New Orleans, Louisiana.

Have just returned from an exploration trip into southern Mexico, in what constitutes about the only virgin wilderness, ninety per cent unexplored, left in Mexico or Central America. Had a every interesting trip from every standpoint. Got into some country that has been on my nerves for some time, but as usual was on business so only got to scratch the surface as far as things that really interest me were concerned.

I brought out over thirty samples of valuable hard woods which were unknown before, and killed two or three kinds of animals which I had never encountered before.

I noticed in "Camp-Fire" of the March 10th issue a letter regarding chigoes, niguas, garrapatas, etc., and I was forced to wonder if any one reading the description of garraptas would have the slightest idea after they were through reading that garrapata was the Spanish name for "tick." Also that that in my fifteen years in and out of Central America I have never come in contact with, nor do I know of any who has, the "Chigger," or, as he is called in the south, "Red bug." Niguas, as spoken of in the letter do not swell the feet but deaden the part affected, forming a small sack in which are deposited the eggs, and are easily removed with the aid of a common needle. I have never seen a native suffer ill effect from a nigua yet, and I have seen many of them, have had a few of them myself, in fact, and I don't go barefoot either.—TRACY RICHARDSON.

FROM one comrade comes this earnest plea for more natural and normal living, for country rather than city life. I imagine most of us agree with him.

Please start a campaign that will discourage this nasty stinking city rush on the part of our young

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people and cry with all your power "Back to the country." I do not so much mind sin, evil, so long as it is human and virile, but this sexless, silly viciousness! Give us true men and women again, and only country life will restore the youth of the nation.

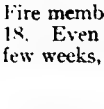
Our magazine and Camp-Fire are themselves campaigns for life outside the cities and we who gather here are not the type who like the effeminate viciousness, luxury and sordidness that so strongly characterize life in our big cities. I think we're all ready to endorse a campaign like that. But just how should we go about it? One great objection handicaps the idea—it is a simple and common-sense idea. That isn't the kind of idea people consider worth while. It isn't sufficiently learned and impressive, and it is too fundamental.

But we're ready to do what we can, aren't we? And after all there are a good many of us. Has any one any suggestions?

HERE'S a bit out of a letter from a woman who's been a Camp-Fire comrade since 1912. She sounds like a real person and a real adventurer. As to any woman's getting along in any foreign countries, well, I'd say it depended a whole lot on the woman and quite a little on circumstances. If I had a daughter I'd want to be awfully sure she were particularly fitted for adventuring in foreign lands before I let her take the risks.

Since 1900 I have been traveling—*i. e.* working my way over the world, mostly Mexico, Central America and South America, hoofing it, canoeing, sailing and on passenger boats and have never been broke yet, although after several months in your "God's good city" I am badly bent. You can tell any female, who is willing to work, possessing health, steno or clerk (even not knowing the languages), that she can get along in any country as well as a man if she be an adventurer at heart.

While there may be some bad men I have never met them abroad. Some may not be polished, but they all respect a woman and even American consuls exert themselves to help you obtain work. All I have met have always been comradely like Camp-Fire members and when I first ran away I was only 18. Even yet I don't feel the urge to settle, but in a few weeks, as soon as I decide where, I'm off again.



ONE of you came to the assistance of F. P. Merritt in his search for some American who had won the Victoria Cross, giving the name of Dr. B. S. Hutcheson. Several other cases came up at Camp-Fire but some of you contended that any such case was an impossibility. Yet here is at least one such case:

New York City.

I have just received a set of books from London containing some new matter on the "V. C." I find in there the following record which concerns the American Dr. Hutcheson, and verifies our thought that he was an American:

HUTCHESON, BELLENDEN SEYMOUR, Capt., was born on 16 Dec. 1883, at Mount Carmel, Illinois, U. S. A., son of Mr. Bellenden Hutcheson, of Mound City, Illinois and Luella Bellenden Hutcheson. He graduated in medicine at the Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois, and later practised as a physician and surgeon at Mound City, Illinois. He served in the European War, joining the 97th Batt. on 14 Dec. 1915, and serving as M.O. to that unit. He afterward served in France as M.O. of 75th Batt. He was awarded the Military Cross for work on 8 Aug. 1918, and was awarded the Victoria Cross (London *Gazette*, 14 Dec., 1918): "Bellenden Seymour Hutcheson, Capt., Canadian Army Medical Corps, attached 75th Batt., 1st Central Ontario Regt. For most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty on 2 Sept., when, under most intense shell, machine-gun and rifle fire, he went through the Queant-Drocourt Support Line with the Battalion. Without hesitation and utter disregard of personal safety, he remained on the field until every wounded man had been attended to. He dressed the wounds of a seriously wounded officer under terrific machine-gun and shell fire, and, with the assistance of prisoners and of his own men, succeeded in evacuating him to safety, despite the fact that the bearer party suffered heavy casualties."

Capt. Hutcheson is unmarried.—F. P. MERRITT.

INDEXES by volume for most of the volumes of *Adventure* back to about 1912 are on hand and will be sent free to any reader who will pay the necessary postage. Allow about one-half cent per index for postage and be sure to specify the volumes for which you wish the indexes when you write. And remember that the supply of some of the indexes is very low and may be exhausted by the time your letter is received.

OUR Camp-Fire Stations are spreading steadily over the map. Help make them grow. Any qualified person can start a Station.

A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

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A Station bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

Keepers answer letters only if they wish. For local information write "Ask Adventure."

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp-Fire members are excellent.

The only connection between a Station and this magazine is that stated above, and a Keeper is in no other way responsible to this magazine nor representative of it.

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209—Quartzite. Buck Conner, Box 4.
285—Yuma. W. P. Kline, 4th Ave. & 8th St.

Arkansas—161—Hot Springs. Tom Manning, Jr., 322 Morrison Ave.

California—28—Lost Hills. Mr. and Mrs. M. A. Monson, Cottage Inn.
60—San Bernardino. Charles A. Rouse, Hotel St. Augustine.
73—Galt. E. M. Cook, Box 256.
74—Eagle Rock. John R. Finney, 109 Eddy Ave.
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210—Berkeley. Dr. Louis C. Mullikin, 305 Acheson Bldg.
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117—Miami. Miami Canoe Club, 115 S. W. South River Drive.
128—Titusville. Max von Koppelow, Box 1014.
138—St. Petersburg. Miss Maude V. Hughson, 2402 First Ave. So.
139—St. Petersburg. Capt. Lee Whetstone, Hotel Poinsettia.
143—St. Petersburg. J. G. Barnhill, 10 Third St. N.
158—Crescent City. E. N. Clark, care *Call*.
188—Johnson. Clifford Martin.
258—Jacksonville. T. J. Eppes, The Hobby Shop.
262—Wildwood. E. M. Dilly, L. B. 114.
285—Tampa. R. Stuart Murray, Mezzanine Floor, Hillsboro Hotel.
288—Orlando. O. D. Young, 112 Court St.

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79—Lansing. Geo. H. Allen, *Lansing Industrial News*, 109½ N. Washington Ave.
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131—Muskegon. James Fort Forsyth, Forsythia, R. F. D. No. 3.
137—Flint. O'Leary & Livingston, 309 So. Saginaw St.
192—Pickford. Dr. J. A. Cameron, The Grand Theater.
227—Adrian. S. N. Cook, 221 Clinton St.

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145—St. Cloud. F. T. Tracy, 426 Eighth Ave. N.
299—Minneapolis. Russell Hearne, 411 First Ave. N.

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99—Picayune. D. E. Jonson.
268—Pascagoula. C. E. Walter, 239 Orange St.

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127—Salem. Emmet C. Higgins, 100 N. Tenth St.
289—Nevada. T. S. Hope, 705 N. Clay St.

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288—Anaconda. R. T. Newman.

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214—Tecumseh. Dr. C. F. Roh.

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203—Elephant Butte via Engle. Henry Stein.
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290—Santa Fé. Ralph E. Pierson.

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244—East Orange. Alfred C. Swenson, 77 Lawton St.
245—Corbin City. Lee Roberts.
260—Camden. Benj. P. Thomas, 2791 Constitution Rd.
269—South Orange. Eugene Connett, 170 Turrel Ave.
275—Camden. Captain Herbert George Sparrow, Ship No. 1269 Naval Post, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Armory of Second Battalion, Naval Militia of New Jersey, Temple Theater Building, 415 Market St.

New York—23—Jamestown. W. E. Jones, 900 Jefferson St.
34—New York City. St. Mary's Men's Club, 142 Alexander Ave., Bronx, N. Y. C.
147—Youngsville. Harry Malowits, Youngsville House.
165—Saratoga. Wm. Marshall, Office No. 9, Chamber of Commerce Arcade.
177—Brooklyn. George Iverson, 306 Macon St.
185—Brooklyn. J. M. Canavan, 69 Bond St.
193—Niagara Falls. Roy Tompkins, 1155 Garret Ave.
194—Hadley. Mrs. Chas. H. Black.
205—Newburgh. Jacques Teller, 5 Golden St.
215—Yonkers. George's Sport Shop, 45 Main St.
226—Red Hook. P. W. E. Hart, The Silver Birch Shop, Albany Post Road, Dutchess Co.
230—New York City. Fred G. Taylor, 424 Broadway, Dobbs Ferry.
233—Albany. R. N. Bradley, 84 Livingston Ave.
239—Valley Stream, Long Island. Arthur Borchmann, Centariane.
298—Walton. S. K. Sherman.

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255—Tryon. Howard Shannon.
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58—Cleveland. J. P. Thompson, Community Pharmacy, 9505 Denison Ave.
63—Ulrichsville. Chas. F. Burroway, 312 Water St.
75—Columbus. Chas. W. Jenkins, 54 S. Burgess Ave.
113—Buena Vista. Geo. T. Watters.
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207—Columbus. Tod S. Raper, 77 Taylor Ave.
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263—Toledo. F. P. Carey, Box 143, Station A.
264—Toledo. S. G. La Plante, 1820 Dunham St.
291—Ravenna. McGraw and Eckler.
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Oklahoma—57—Haskell. Roy Holt.
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286—Portland. W. C. Chapman, 24 Union Ave.
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21—Braddock. Clarence Jenkins, Union News Co.
24—Philadelphia. Alfred A. Krombach, 4159 N. Eighth Street, and Spring Mills Station, P. & R. Ry. Co., Montgomery County.
78—Pittsburgh. Peter C. Szarmach, 3030 Brereton St.
100—Philadelphia. Veterans of Foreign Wars, 926 N. 41st St.
182—Greensburg. Don Frederick Wermuth.
224—Oil City. J. M. Blair, 608 W. Front St.
247—Pittsburgh. J. P. Lichtenhaer, 224 Swope St.
248—Philadelphia. Carl D. Charles, 214 East St. Wissahickon.
261—Shippensberg. *The Chronicle*, 12 South Earl St.
South Dakota—179—Fairburn. Jesse K. Fell, *Custer County Press*.
270—Centerville. C. H. Hornbeck, *The Centerville Journal*.
South Carolina—97—Charleston. J. W. Metts, Navy Yard.
217—Charleston. J. H. Keener, 346 King St.
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123—San Juan. D. L. Carter, Box 436.
134—Breckenridge. Joe Randel, 226 Baylor Avenue.
148—Port Arthur. Ralph C. Cornwell, 215 Eighth St.
174—San Angelo. E. M. Weeks, 24 West Eighth St.
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280—Reese. L. H. Baker.
294—Coleman. Clyde Ransberger.
300—Pecos. Oram Green, Third and Cedar Sts.
Utah—157—Salt Lake City. Ned Howard, 127 N. St.
Virginia—108—Cape Charles. Lynn Stevenson, P. O. Box 26.
219—Richmond. Wm. Meek, 104 S. 1st St.
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61—Burlington. Judge B. N. Albertson, Fairhaven Ave.
83—Seattle. Chas. D. Raymer, Raymer's Old Book-Store, 1330 First Ave.
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235—Sydney. Phillip Norman, 842 Military Road, Nosman, Newtown.
278—Belgrave, Victoria. Raymond Paule, Carn Brea, Old Monbulk Road.
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Belgium—131—Antwerp. Reuben S. James, Place de l'Entrepot 3.
British Columbia—231—Stewart. Jack O'Shea, Ryan Bldg.
236—Vancouver. A. Johnson, 552-3 Hastings St.
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4—Dunedin, P. E. Island. J. N. Berrigan.
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62—Woodstock, Ontario. George L. Catton, 94 Metcalfe St.
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102—Amherst, Nova Scotia. Lloyd E. MacPherson, 5 Belmont St.
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178—Moncton, N. B. Chas. H. McCall, 178 St. George St.
221—Montreal East. M. M. Campbell, 95 Broadway.
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276—Skyland, Page Co., Va. N. Mackintosh.
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156—Ancon. Arthur Haughton, Box 418.
China—222—Tientsin. Dr. George W. Twomey, 43 Rue de Amiraute.
Cuba—15—Havana. Ricardo N. Farres, Dominques, 7 Cerro.
England—296—Longton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire. William Berry, 19 Weston Place, off Heathcote Road.
Egypt—173—Khartoum, Sudany. W. T. Moffat, Sudan Customs.
Germany—283—Dusseldorf. Hans Derrick Hulsmann, care R. A. Visser & Co.
Hawaiian Islands—170—Leilehua, Oahu, Château Shanty.
272—Honolulu, Hawaii. Hubert T. Miller, Room 4, Silent Hotel.
Honduras, C. A.—32—Galeras, Olancho. Dr. Wm. C. Robertson.
70—La Ceiba. Jos Buckly Taylor.
India—197—Calcutta. W. Leishman, 46 Wellesley St.
Mexico—68—Guadalajara, Jal. W. C. Money, Hotel Fenix, Calle Lopez, Cotilla Nos. 269 a 281.
Navy—71—U. S. *Arizona*. Elmer E. McLean.
Newfoundland—132—St. John's. P. C. Mara, Smallwood Bldg.
Nova Scotia—297—Dartmouth. W. E. Sievert, Portland St.
Porto Rico—46—Ensenada. M. B. Couch, P. O. Box 5.
Philippine Islands—198—Manila. W. W. Weston, De La Rama Bldg.
Virgin Islands—301.—St. Thomas, Joseph Reynolds, The Grand Hotel,

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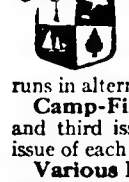

Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

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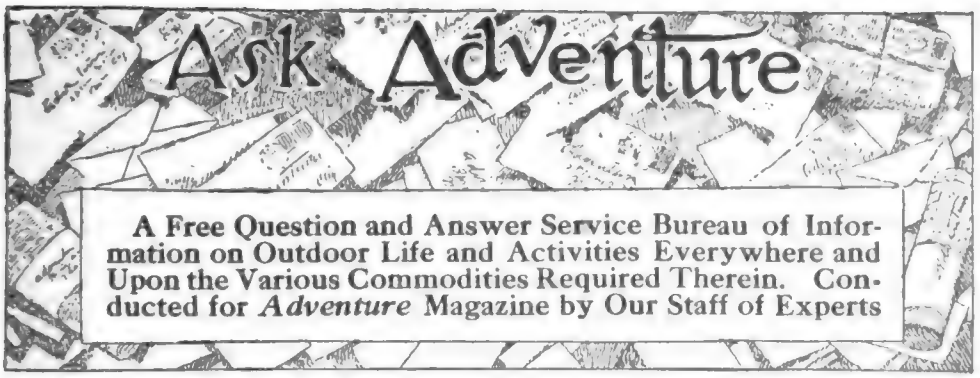
Ask Adventure
A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

1—3. The Sea. In Three Parts
4—6. Islands and Coasts. In Three Parts
7, 8. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
9. Australia and Tasmania
10. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
11. New Guinea
12, 13. Philippine and Hawaiian Islands
13—18. Asia. In Five Parts
19—26. Africa. In Eight Parts
27, 28. Turkey and Asia Minor
29—35. Europe. In Six Parts
36—38. South America. In Three Parts
39. Central America
40—42. Mexico. In Three Parts
43—51. Canada. In Nine Parts
52. Alaska
53. Baffinland and Greenland
54—59. Western U. S. In Six Parts
60—64. Middle Western U. S. In Five Parts
65—74. Eastern U. S. In Ten Parts
A. Radio
B. Mining and Prospecting
C. Old Songs That Men Have Sung
D1—3. Weapons, Past and Present. In Three Parts
E. Salt and Fresh Water Fishing
F, G. Forestry in the U. S. and Tropical Forestry
H—J. Aviation, Army and Navy Matters
K. American Anthropology North of Panama Canal
L. First Aid on the Trail
M. Health-Building Outdoors
N. Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada
O. P. Herpetology and Entomology
Standing Information

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Life in the Philippines

WHERE the school teacher follows the flag:

Request:—"I wish you would inform me concerning conditions on the Philippine Islands, especially in regard to climate, health, the natives, and social conditions.

I have accepted a position as a high school teacher on the island outside of Manila and would like to have you recommend the most promising section and cities on the island for a white man if given a choice in the matter. Also what kind of clothing and other articles to buy in the states before reaching Manila."—JOHN J. BASSETT, Culver City, Col.

Reply, by Mr. Connor:—(a) The climate of the Islands is delightful at times, and at other times disagreeable. There are more than 7,000 islands in the group, of which only 462 have an area of one square mile or more, and only 2,441 are of sufficient importance to have names. The two largest are Luzon and Mindanao. The former contain about 41,000 sq. mi., and the latter about 37,000 sq. mi. The total area of the Islands is about 114,000 sq. mi.

(b) There are but two seasons in the Philippines—the wet and dry. The former from June to October and the latter from November until May. The southern Islands (Cebu, Panay, Negros, Bohol, Mindanao and Sulu) are less marked, the rainfall being more equally distributed. The coolest months are December, January and February. The hottest April and May. The early morning and evenings are very agreeable.

(c) The people have been forging ahead since the Spanish Conquest in 1521. The best evidences are irrigation, expert navigators and ship builders, the raising of cotton and the spinning into woven cloth. The people lived in houses which were grouped into settlements. Gold was mined and manufactured into jewelry, as well as trade being conducted with Japan, China, Borneo and other adjacent Oriental countries.

(d) The census of 1918 enumerated 10,314,110 inhabitants, of which 9,381,357 were Christians, and 932,593 were non-Christians. Of the Pagans there were 508,596, who dwelled in the mountains, and very closely resembled the unsettled Indians of our own Western frontier. Before our acquisition of the Islands the people were for nearly four centuries subjected to and absorbed the Spanish civilization, by which they were converted to the Roman Catholic faith. The group was discovered by Ferdinand Magellan March 16th, 1521—a monument stands to his memory on the west coast of Cebu, just south of the Iloilo Straits. We took the Philippines on May 1st (Dewey Day), 1898, after the destruction of Admiral Montijo's Spanish Armada. Since that date we have worked wonders with the people, as our schoolteachers followed close to the firing line, and they have had the advantages of our own civilization.

(e) The actual head of the Islands is of course the President of the United States, who appointed a Governor-General (Major-General Leonard Wood) by and with the consent of our Senate. The Insular Government is headed by a Legislature and Insular Secretaries appointed by the Governor-General. There are nine Justices of the Supreme Court. There are 297 Municipal Districts containing 892 municipalities. There are but two chartered cities in the Islands—Manila and Baguio. There are 24 Senators and 93 Representatives in the Philippine Legislature.

(f) As regards your calling there are 53 School Districts; 24,000 Filipino elementary teachers, and more than 500 secondary subject teachers. The Filipino school year begins early in June and ends in late March.

(g) Your transportation (if working for the Government, being paid, the cost being about $200.00 of which amount reimbursement is made at the end of your two year contract.

(h) Plenty of underwear, hats, ties, collars should be purchased in the U. S. If you have light woolen suit and overcoat take it with you. White cotton drill suits are made to order in Manila at $5.00 to $7.50 each. Wait until you reach Manila for this clothing. In Manila board and lodging can be secured at from $60.00 to $75.00 a month. In the outer districts (Provinces) you can get it for $45.00 a month. The health of the Islands records in 1922 a death rate of 20.14 per thousand.

I believe that I have about covered the essentials of your trip aside from your days upon the ocean, and I wish you Bon Voyage, but for selection of a place for your work, that much is in your own hands, as I do not know your likes or dislikes.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do NOT write to the magazine itself.

The Royal Family of Jugo-Slavia

A KING chosen because of capability rather than because of birth:

Request:—"I would like to have you tell me all you can about the present royal family of Jugo-Slavia, also the countries, customs and language."—MISS IRENE HART, Cameron, W. Va.

Reply, by Lt. Jenna:—Perhaps it would be well to go back in history a little and work forward in the Royal Family. It may be said that Stephen Dushan was the first King of a proper Serbia and he was their King from 1336 to 1356. Serbia at that time included all Macedonia, Albania, Thessaly, Northern Greece and Bulgaria. Then came Lazar I who was captured by the Turks at the Battle of Kossova in 1389 and was put to death. Serbia, at that time disappears as an autonomous kingdom and becomes tributary to Turkey. Early in the 19th century Black George once again succeeded in gaining the liberty of his country, but it was lost again after one year. Then in 1815 Milosh led the Serbs to complete freedom and he mounted the throne. He was compelled to abdicate in 1839 and was succeeded by his brother Milan who, however, died and left the throne to his brother Michael. In 1842 Michael was forced to abdicate and "Black George's" son, Alexander Karageorgevitch succeeded to the throne. (It is the Karageorgevitch line on the throne now.) In 1858 this last was also forced to abdicate. Milosh was then recalled, but was succeeded, after about a year, by his son Michael. The

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latter was assassinated in 1868. At that time the Obrenovitch line came to the throne in the person of Milan who was the grand-nephew of Milosh. In 1889 Milan abdicated in favor of his son Alexander who was assassinated in 1903. At that time the Karageorgevitch line was replaced on the throne in the person of Peter. Peter ruled over Serbia until August, 1921, when he died and was succeeded by his son Alexander, who is the present King of Jugo-Slavia. Alexander was born in 1888. He was not the Crown Prince, but was chosen as the successor to the Crown because of certain traits of character which made the Crown Prince unfit to be King. The Crown Prince accordingly relinquished all his rights to succession to the throne in favor of Alexander.

Alexander is to my mind a fine type of man for a King. He was the virtual Commander-in-Chief of the Serbian Armies during the World War and was right with his troops at all times. He was with his Armies when they made their marvelous retreat over the Albanian Mountains in the dead of the winter of 1915 and he led them to victory in the magnificent Allied drive in Macedonia in September, 1918. I was in Salonica, Greece, at the time that this drive was launched and I know the wonderful fighting which the Serbian soldiers put up and I know how they swept all obstacles to one side which were between them and their Belgrade.

Under Alexander's rule the triune kingdom has been flourishing wonderfully. As one example of their desire to progress and improve I can cite the following: In 1920 it required four nights and five days to make the trip from Belgrade to Salonica by rail. This is a distance of 375 miles. In 1921 that time had been cut down to 36 hours.

Alexander's Kingdom which was Serbia before the World War, had a population of about 3,000,000 people. His Kindom now, which is Jugo-Slavia or the "Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes" has a population of about 12,000,000.

Alexander was married to a Roumanian Princess in 1922 and, I believe, there is now an heir to the Jugo-Slav throne.

Jugo-Slavia now comprises Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Banat and the Batchka. The language is the Slav language which is very similar to Russian, Bulgarian and Tchekoslovak.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

Railroad Jobs in the West

PRETTY good chances for a girl with experience:

Request:—"What are the prospects of securing a railroad position in the West? I'm an experienced railroad stenographer, familiar with station agent's work."—Miss E. D. Ramsey, Cedar Grove, W. Va.

Reply, by Mr. Newman:—A girl familiar with freight office work, who is also a stenographer, should have no trouble in securing a position on some of the western or northwestern railroads, if you get your application in at the right place at the right time.

As a rule in most offices in this part of the country, outside of large offices such as Portland, Seattle, Spokane, Salt Lake City, etc., you would do other office work, such as making reports, billing freight, and help out on the different desks at times along with your stenographer work, taking dictation from the agent, and sometimes the claim clerk regarding their correspondence.

Of course you will have to do some corresponding to the different offices along some of these roads, and address your letter to the Freight Agent, and write them a short letter stating your experience, and you will get replies, and I suggest you write to the C. M. & St. P. Ry., Northern Pacific, Great Northern, and Union Pacific, and take the Official Railroad Guide and pick out such stations along these lines as Butte, Billings, Bozeman, Great Falls, Spokane, Boise, Missoula, etc.

If you should happen to locate with the Milwaukee road, you would be able to get transportation from Chicago to destination, and if with the G. N. Ry., or N. P. Ry., you would get transportation from St. Paul to destination, and with the U. P. Ry., from Omaha to destination, this is according to how the agent feels about.

The railroads, since the Interstate Commerce Commission was organized, have tried to make the R. R. employees think that this Commission is very strict, according to the use of transportation, which is correct as far as outsiders are concerned, but not with R. R. employees, as it favors the R. R. employee. The Law is—

"A pass may be issued to a bona fide ex-employee of any carrier subject to the act who is traveling for the purpose of entering the service of any such common carrier, whether such service has or has not previously been arranged."

The provisions of the law relative to the issuance of passes are simply permissive; that is, it is optional with the carriers whether they shall grant passes to persons who are eligible under the law to receive and use same. Whether or not a carrier may properly grant passes in particular instances is a question which can and must be determined by the carrier itself upon its own responsibility. The Commission does not undertake to determine that question in individual cases. So you get in a few applications up this way, and when you secure a position, it is nine times out of ten that you will get a pass to your new position. I wish you success.

Japanese Swords

THE proper use of weapons was dictated by the feudal system in Nippon:

Request:—"In a late issue I read your answer to a question about Japanese swords. You stated in the answer that the blades were generally eighteen inches long. (I mean the blades of the *katanas*). In the museum here (at the Ohio State University) there are two swords which answer to the questioner's description of his Jap sword, except that the larger one has a blade about twenty-five or six inches long. It has a black scabbard and a small dagger which goes through a hole in the side of the guard and fits into a scabbard on the side of the big scabbard. The smaller one is just like the large one except that the blade is about seventeen inches long. Both swords seem to be single-handed.

Did the swords ever vary in length?

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Did the *daimios* ever use a larger sword than the *samurai*?

Did the *samurai* use any other weapon than swords?

Did they (the *samurai*) wear armor?

Did they have a system of fencing or was it merely cut-and-thrust?

How did they dress?

Did they fight duels?

Was it permissible to kill anybody but yourself with a *wakizisha*?

Were *samurai* recruited or was *samurai-ship* passed from father to son?

Did they have officers?

What did they call them?

What religion did the *samurai* favor?

These questions may sound funny but I am unable to find out anything much about the *samurai*.

Are there any novels or historical fiction about the Japanese feudal period?"—ROGER B. WILSON, Columbus, Ohio.

P. S. Those swords in the museum are labeled Japanese swords of the feudal period.

Reply, by Miss Knudson:—Before answering your definite questions I'm going to give a brief outline of history of the so-called feudal period in Japan in order that you may get a better understanding of this sword business.

What some historians designate as the Military Epoch and some the Kamakura Epoch of Japanese history extended from about the beginning of the 12th century to the middle of the 19th. It is, perhaps, the most distinctive as well as the most interesting period in the Empire's development. Native writers, dramatists, and artists have taken advantage of the romance and adventure material this period affords, but, unfortunately, not much of it has been put into form for Western enjoyment.

The Epoch was ushered in by twenty-two years of war between the rival clans of *Taira* and *Minamoto*. In the end Minamoto Yoritomo became the most powerful military commander in the land and, under the title of *shogun*, established (1192-99 A.D.) a military capital at Kamakura, thus inaugurating feudalism and a dual government. The Mikado became, and remained for years, a revered name; his power-shorn person remained a virtual prisoner in his palace at Kyoto.

From the time of Yoritomo the Kamakura Epoch may be divided into (1) the *Hójó* Era (1200-1339); (2) *Ashikaga* Era (1339-1587); (3) *Tokugawa* Era (1587-1853).

The first era experienced and repulsed the great Mongol invasions; the second saw the coming of the Portuguese (1542) and the Jesuit missionaries (1549); the third finally persecuted the Christians, as a result of the conduct of the Portuguese and Jesuits, excluded all foreigners but Dutch, Koreans and Chinese, forbade Japanese to leave the country. The period of Japan's isolation from the world began about 1624 and ended with the entrance of Commodore Perry in 1853. This event marked the fall of the *Tokugawa* shogunate, the end of the feudal system, the beginning of modern Japan, and made way for restoration of the Mikado to power in 1868.

During all these centuries, when might decided right, war and agriculture were the necessary and leading occupations; so that soldiers and farmers comprised the two great middle classes. Above these were princes, nobles and over-lords, below were certain despised small groups of menials.

The *shogun* at first was a court noble appointed a commander of the Mikado's army; a generalissimo of three regiments—a regiment was sometimes a thousand men—was *Tai-Shogun*, an under commander was a *Fuku-Shogun*. Then the title was usurped by *Yoritomo* and came to distinguish the military ruler—in the sense we know it.

A *daimio* was originally a representative of the Mikado sent from Kyoto to govern some unruly province. They grew in power and possessions and became soldier-farmer or feudal princes and lords over great fiefs. Their military retainers came to be known as *samurai*—this was a sort of general name for the warrior-gentleman class; so a *daimio* was a *samurai* in the sense that he was a warrior.

The custom of wearing two swords as a badge of the gentleman and soldier dates, probably, from the 14th century. In the 16th century it became obligatory. The custom was abolished by Imperial edict of March 28, 1876, taking effect January 1,1877 Shortly after another edict rescinded the first and gave *anyone* liberty to wear whatever swords he pleased. This took away the class distinction so nobody cared to take advantage of the privilege.

1. Yes; the swords varied in length, though the typical *samurai* fighting blade—*katana*—was about 18 inches; the smaller dirk blade—*wakizashi*—for *hara-kiri* was about 9½ inches. These were the lengths of the latter part of the *Tokugawa* Era, when the sword had become more of a badge of nobility and less of a war instrument. This was an era of more or less intellectual and industrial development. The more ancient sword—*tsurugi*—was a straight, double-edged, heavy blade some 3 feet long, wielded with both hands. Some of the old horseback warriors carried blades six feet long—so Griffis says in his book, "The Mikado's Empire."

The *samurai* swords dating back to real fighting days, a number of which I have seen in the old museum at Kamakura and in the old temples, were ordinarily about two feet for the long and one foot for the short swords. In Blacker's book "The A B C of Japanese Art" is the picture of a pair of blades captioned "the fighting sword 2 ft. long, the ornamental sword 1 ft. 6 in."

Those in your State University vary some from these dimensions, you see, and are probably of the early feudal period. I did not go into this detail of lengths in my letter to Mr. Mann, since the blades described by him were the shorter ones—old but probably not ancient. The black scabbard was at one time for "full dress" and the smaller dagger—*kodzuka*—one of the usual "furnishings" of the sword.

2. I can't find that the *daimio*—as a class—used any different sword than the *samurai*. They often had very beautifully fitted ones and large collections of them, according to taste and wealth. The size, fittings, color of scabbard, manner of wearing, seemed to depend upon the individual owner.

3. Yes; the *samurai* went through pretty near all stages of weaponry in warfare, I should say. Their favorites seem to have been arrows, lances and swords.

4. They wore picturesque and heavy armor varying in different eras, and much has been preserved in interesting collections—both private and museum.

5. Fencing was a part of the training of both men and women of the *samurai* class.

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6. Some dressed in armor for real fighting, and at other periods the warriors wore voluminous kimono-like coats and skirts. Certain cords attached to the scabbard of the sword are said to have been for the purpose of tying back the big sleeves when engaging in a fight.

7. Duels and family feuds seem to have flourished in the feudal period, though the duel was often a spur-of-the-moment affair with no backers near. A back-to-back maneuver by two *samurai* so that their scabbards would clash was "throwing down the gauntlet" for an immediate encounter. Sometimes the leaders of two opposing forces would fight to the finish, whilst their armies awaited the outcome.

8. I think the dirk was usable only for *hara-kiri*. I cannot find that it was ever used for any other purpose. It was ordinarily held sacred to a man's honor.

9. At first—in days way back—the warriors were recruited for the Mikado's army and from the farmer class. There gradually developed from these recruits the later warrior class, which in turn developed into the *samurai* class. Then one born a *samurai* was always a *samurai* and trained as such from a baby. It was not impossible, however, for a brilliant farmer to develop into a warrior, if he chose to leave the plough for the sword. Remember this development covered centuries.

10 and 11. The rule of the *daimio* was by a very complicated system of departments, divisions, officers. Then the military regiments were divided and subdivided. These divisions and their officers all varied from era to era and from generation to generation, according to the individuality and preferment of the feudal lord. In the armies the officers corresponded in general with our captains, lieutenants, sergeants.

12. Bushido is the celebrated creed or philosophy or thought of the *samurai*.

13. See "Bushido," by Nitobe; "Samurai Trails," by Kirtland, published by Doran; "Tales of Old Japan," Mitford; "The Flower of Old Japan," Noyes; "Warriors of Old Japan," Ozaki; "The Fighting Spirit of Japan," Harrison; "The Mikado's Empire," Griffis.

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The Golden State

CALIFORNIA abounds in romance:

Request:—"I am writing to you as C. R. Maheffay advised for information on Romantic California and the Great West. I have an essay to prepare for 'Woman's Federated Club'—subject for the year 1925 is 'Travel in America'—each month taking up different parts of the U. S., and my essay is to cover the subject mentioned.—'Romantic California and the Great West.'

Anything you can send me concerning history, travel or romance will be delightfully received"—MRS. E. M. STUBBLEFIELD, Brighton, Ill.

Reply, by Mr. Harriman:—In my nine years of answering letters of inquiry, I have received an infinite variety of letters, but yours is the first to treat of this particular subject. It is one that might induce the writing of volumes, had I the time to spare for the work, for California is rich in romance as it is in scenery.

In ancient writings California was designated as an island and it was so described in various works. Maps were even drawn, showing it in much the shape it now holds, save for a wide channel cutting it off from the mainland. It was a land of fabulous riches, a land of untold ease and comfort for those who reached its borders. Indeed the ancient and voluble writer represented it as a sort of earthly paradise.

The early Spanish found it fulfilling many of the expectations, since game was abundant, stock raising was astonishingly simple and the natives made industrious slaves. Not that they were called slaves, but neophytes, though no magnifying glass could detect any difference between the two. Whatever the term applied, the results were identical, since the neophyte could not roam, received no pay for his labor, felt the lash of a taskmaster just as often. Only he was taught that salvation was his if he served his masters faithfully for scanty raiment and food.

There were many tribes of aborigines in California. Those on the islands of the south were Pimugnais, the last member of that tribe dying on the mainland about thirty years ago, a lonely old woman.

On the mainland were the Pomo people of the northern coast, a tribe that still persists, using sewing machines and the various tools and weapons, garments and *money* of the white man. A gentle people, who smile easily and are always peaceful in their instincts.

On the south coast were several tribes whose original, aboriginal names are not known to me, but were called Mission Indians, after the padres secured control and dominated them. Where Los Angeles now stands was a village of about three hundred natives, barely above the coyotes in civilization and intelligence. This village they called Yangna.

Morals were almost unknown among them, but they received the Spanish with kindness and courtesy, offering food and shelter freely. Indolent, dirty, unmoral, they showed great timidity, yet when assailed by a warlike tribe from an inland valley, they would fight like a leopard, intent upon wreaking the greatest possible injury upon the enemy, even when dying.

This because being driven from their homes meant death and they all knew it. Merely another case of the trapped rat.

The Indian tribes existing in the mountain fastnesses were different in many ways. They were more intelligent, more industrious, showed a far higher grade of intelligence, possessed more courage and somewhat more of morals, though the best of them were sadly lacking there. Resisting severe climatic conditions for generations, coupled with the need of a keener mentality for the outwitting of enemies and capturing animals of superior qualities, had bred intelligence in them.

The Spanish dominion became much akin to the south of slavery days in many ways. The young men excelled in horsemanship, in dancing, in the graces that are supposed to captivate the softer sex and in the use of certain weapons, such as the Spanish dagger. They loafed, drank red wine, played romantic airs on the guitar, taught their saddle horses to lean against a house wall and remain

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immovable while the rider stood in his saddle to reach and kiss the hands of his inamorata, thrust between bars to reach him.

They fought each other to the death with as much abandon as ever. Villon, the poet-thief, used a rapier on a rival. Riding forty, fifty, even a hundred miles to a grand ball was nothing to them. In the saddle at sunrise, they would eat a six o'clock supper with the host and dance until another sunrise. All through the night the wine would flow and barbecued meats would be ready to hand for the hungry.

Then, in the early morning, a long line of caballeros would form at the front of the casa, an equally long line of señoritas would take distance one hundred yards ahead, all well mounted, and the girls would start riding. At the fluttered signal of a handkerchief, the young men would lean forward, stab hot flanks with long rowels and the line of dancing, impatient horses would leap forward.

What a race there would be then. Forty or fifty girls fleeing and as many young men in the chase. Dodging, nimblefooted horses would do a large amount of tricks to save their feminine riders. Equally skilled, the following squadron would dart here or there, stop, wheel, leap into a thundering run and pivot again to intercept the quarry.

Sad to think that innocent girls would ever deceive, but all too often, some señorita who had showed superb control of her mount and an incredible amount of skill in evading a man she disliked, would lose all semblance of control and fall an easy victim to her real lover.

California lent itself to such a life to a great degree, because no kindlier climate exists in the world. Because its plains were very beautiful in their green carpeting in springtime. Because the young people had no cares, abundant leisure, plenty of horses and the example of their elders encouraged them in making pleasure the business of life. Peons from Mexico and Indian servants bore the burdens, while the gentry sported and the rich grazing land increased their wealth.

But California in herself carries romance beyond most countries. It still holds it and offers it with open hands to all who look with appreciative eyes. Where in the world could you find a forest to equal those of Humboldt and Del Norte Counties, where redwood trees, that were large enough to mill into lumber when St. Paul delivered his sermon on THE UNKNOWN GOD, stand thickly? Where could you look up through three hundred feet of distance to mark the feathery crest of another tree as beautiful and graceful as a sempervirens?

There in Humboldt I have seen groves covering thousands of acres, where redwood trees stood like massive brown columns, a hundred feet or more from the ground to the first limb. Could the forest of Arden show anything equal to this? Where the ground is covered with ferns, oxalis and wild iris of pale lavender color, where there is no underbrush and a perpetual twilight softens the noonday sunlight. Where the long bough wets its tip in the crystal waters of the Van Duzen River and the green tracery of the most graceful tree foliage in America hides the banks for miles and miles, romance is alive, in every breeze.

Then California's long mountain range, the Sierra Nevadas, more than seven hundred miles long, covered with such pine and fir forests as no other state can boast, pines ten to fifteen feet in diameter standing thickly all across the range in some parts, while others, running from four to eight feet in diameter, mantle millions of acres.

In this range more than three hundred lakes of great beauty lie limpid and calm under a cloudless sky. Hundreds of creeks and rivers flow down from the high ridges, tumbling over cascades and roaring past huge boulders tumbled from superior heights.

Here again one breathes romance, for the mountain scenery inspires and encourages it. Who could traverse that wonderful stretch of mountain scenery from Olancha Peak to Tahoe without feeling the spell of romance while observing the grandeur of its 349 peaks that range from 9,000 feet elevation up to 14,500?

The spell touches the toilers of our western sea as well, since the islands along this coast are among the most picturesque in the world and some are rugged beyond description on their seaward side, while delightfully pastoral and inviting towards the mainland.

Who could imagine a more romantic life than that of the earlier inhabitants of these islands, fishing and crossing thirty miles of sea to carry their catch to market? Living in little colonies of a dozen families, maintaining a tiny school, building an equally tiny church, out on a tranquil sea at break of day and perhaps kept out on the ocean for twenty-four hours or more by sudden storms, they reared their sons to lives of daring and danger.

Romance? She flits from place to place, seldom pausing long, if the wrong person seeks her. She is in every nook, by every brook, when one who carries the key to nature's riddles is questing.

Twin sister is she to Adventure and they twain go hand in hand. The mountains sing of her and the roar of sea waves, breaking on Catalina or Santa Cruz, chant her praises. The summer breeze that bows the heads of ripe grasses and ruffles the face of the placid lake is but carrying her train.

There is romance in the development of our wonderful water power. Building great concrete dams, some of them two hundred feet high or more, driving tunnels through great mountains, one just finished being thirteen miles long, bringing the water down through turbine after turbine, until the same flow has exerted its force a score of times, savors of both Adventure and Romance, as truly as ever did a knightly quest.

Taking an expanse of desert land, where the winter rains bring the brief, but brilliant desert flowers every spring, and the Joshua tree in all its ragged awkwardness is the sole indication of forestation, and turning it into a broad vista of flowering orchards is a romantic miracle and it is being done continually.

Twenty-four years ago not one white man lived or worked in Imperial Valley. Romantic, imaginative men looked and dreamed of great farms and gardens and orchards. Today Imperial Valley yields its fifty million dollars' worth of products of the soil each year.

The San Joaquin and Sacramento Rivers formed a delta region ages ago. Two of my friends, romantic young college graduates, went hunting ducks in the delta region. They told a millionaire of a romantic day dream they had indulged in up there. He furnished the money and they made that dream come true. Today that delta holds the world record of 960 bushels of potatoes to the acre, average on fifteen hundred acres. Is there not something of romance in that achievement?

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Indian Names

HOW the young bucks of the Western tribes got themselves cognomens.

Request:—"I want such information as you may have concerning the custom among Western Indian tribes when the young buck was seeking a name. In a general way I understand that the brave would go to an isolated place, there to fast and pray until he saw a vision or visions from which he took his name. I am particularly interested in the Shoshone tribe, but suppose that the habit in the neighboring tribes—Crow, Cheyenne, Sioux, Blackfeet, etc.—would be quite similar.

1. About what age would a brave seek his name as mentioned above?

2. Was, or is, there any specific name for this act?

3. Did the medicine men give the name seeker any assistance before he left?

4. Were prayers addressed to any particular deity—the sun, the coyote, etc., while seeking this name?

5. How was the brave known before this time—that is, was he called by his father's name, or after some happenstance, or either?

6. If, at the appearance of the fast induced visions, the brave saw a crazy eagle, a white coyote, and a spotted elk, in the order named, which would he chose or be obliged to take? In other words, was there any compulsion or rule in this matter, forcing the man, perhaps, to take an undesirable name?

7. Suppose the youngster proved unvisionary. Could he name himself after some animal, or thing, or unusual phenomena that came within his eye range while fasting?"—ROBERT POUND.

Reply, by Mr. Woodward:—Regarding your questions anent "dream names." There was no hard or fast rule pertaining to an Indian's name. During his lifetime he might go by three or four names, depending entirely upon the man and the circumstances.

I will give an example of naming among the Cheyenne as related by Grinnell in his work "The Cheyenne Indians" his latest and considered by the majority of ethnologists, the best history yet written of any of the Plains tribes.

Pet names were given children at a very tender age. One common term of endearment for little boys was "Mok so is" meaning "Pot Belly." When the youngster was six or seven years old he was given his first formal name. He might be named after his father's brother or grandfather. As a rule care was taken to give him a name whereby he might have a good nickname in after years.

Your idea of seeking a name was I believe more on the order of "seeking a power" *i. e.* dreaming of some animal or being as a protective "medicine." By so doing he did not however necessarily change his name. As a rule young men did not go out upon the hills or in secluded places until they were at least twenty years old. If he sought a certain power, that is desired to receive aid to help him ward off danger in battle, cure the sick or bring buffalo, etc. he might go to some older man who had received a similar power in a dream and by a system of payments be initiated into the mystery of that certain power.

Or a man might dream an original dream, sing new songs and make his own medicine bundle and abide by the tabus of that power. It might even cause him to call himself by a different name.

THERE were times when very young boys chose to take the warpath with older braves. If on this journey the lads did some brave deed, killed an enemy or counted a coup, new names would be given them by mother, aunt, uncle or other near relation. Generally such names were those of brave men either dead or living. In case the name chosen was that of a living man, that man then chose himself a new name.

A man might win a name from some peculiarity. He might have a deformed hand and Crooked Hand would be the result. One version of how Rain in the Face received his name is that when a youngster he fought another boy all one morning on a very rainy day and emerged a victor with blood and rain streaming from his face, hence the name quoted. Certain Soldier Bands among the Cheyenne obtained their names from incidents or locations in which the tribe happened to be camped at the time.

These rules do not hold for all tribes however, each nation had its own peculiarities. I cite the Cheyennes because they are a typical Plains people, and a valiant tribe.

Colonel Dodge in his "Thirty-Three Years Among Our Wild Indians" also mentions the uncertainty of the Indian system of naming. Get that book and read pages 226-231 and you will get a better idea of it.

The fasting was generally done as I have said to receive supernatural aid. A man might reject any medicine animal that did not meet his special requirements, providing he deemed the dream being insufficient in its powers. As a rule these animals were adopted as the totem of the man and taught him his medicine songs and dances and described to him what paraphernalia he would need. Prayers were addressed to the Sun, Mother Earth, and scores of other minor "powers."

However, there is not room enough here for me to give a detailed description of these various powers to which prayers might be addressed. Go to the library and read Grinnell's book on the Cheyennes. To get a different version of naming, see if you can obtain a copy of Alanson Skinner's "Material Culture of the Menomini," it may be purchased from the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation for $6.

I hope you'll overlook the delay in answering this letter but between moving my effects to California from New York and getting reestablished, I have not found much time to get down to business in the A. A. line. In case I have not given you what you desire, come again and I'll endeavor to clarify matters.

Prospecting on Prince of Wales Island

WHAT a young checako ought to know.

Request:—"My friend and I would like to go prospecting on Prince of Wales Island and for any information you may proffer or care to add on this region we shall be very grateful.

1. What range of temperature may we expect from June to September? Is it rainy? Will heavy underwear and slickers be necessary?

2. Could we use a 38-55 rifle and a 12-guage shotgun? Does the law permit the shooting of game during the summer? Is a hunting license necessary? How much will one cost?

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3. Financing the trip is our greatest obstacle. So we intend to freight our old clothes and practically all of our equipment. Because we must pay as much freight on ten pounds as on seventy pounds we might as well purchase what we need here and I think we can buy considerably cheaper. We intend to purchase a miners tent 7 x 7 of 10 ounce duck, waterproof ground, sheets, blankets, cooking utensils, etc. Do you deem this plan advisable?

4. Is it absolutely necessary to have a boat? What other way can you suggest in getting to the island?

5. If we landed in Kitchican with one hundred and fifty dollars and equipment could we prospect on that sum for two months? Could it be done with two hundred and fifty dollars sans equipment? We are not even moderately well "fixed" and upon your candid answer to the above questions rests the fate of the trip. We expect to do without a lot of things and *don't* expect to live the life of "Reilly." So please give us your unreserved opinion on the above.

6. Can we expect any placer mining? What books can you recommend on lode prospecting?"—A. A. REDISKE, Mayville, Wis.

Reply, by Mr. Victor Shaw:—I'll answer your questions first, in their order:

1. The temperature averages around 60-70 degrees, not very warm and not cold, during the summer. You need blankets at night and I find light woolen underwear agreeable at all times. The "rainy season" is over during the months of May to September, and you'll get only the usual and occasional rains experienced anywhere. It is usually very fine weather for the months mentioned. However, it is always advisable to have a slicker and sou'wester in your outfit, also a pair of hip-length gum boots.

2. A 38-55 is O. K. although I prefer a 30-40 for general use. A 12-guage shotgun is almost a necessity, for ducks, geese, grouse, etc. You can simply tell any one that you are prospecting—a prospector can by Territorial law shoot all the game he needs to eat in camp at any season. You need no fishing or hunting license, when you're prospecting. Our game laws are administered mainly for market hunters and outside sportsmen who come in to slaughter all they can.

3. Your camp outfit will do you O. K. up here, and it's O. K. to freight it in. You can get grub supplies in town of any sort and at prices comparing very favorably with those in Seattle.

4. You can hardly get along without some sort of a boat. A skiff will do, when you get it over there on the island. You may be able to pick up a used boat, good enough, at $15 or $20. You can get a new 12-foot skiff here for $30. There is a regular mail boat that goes to Prince of Wales, every week, and it will take you and your outfit, though I can't tell you what the fare is right now, probably not over $5.00. This will get you over there. Then, you can tent on the beach anywhere until you decide just where you want to go—then wait for calm weather, when it doesn't blow, or travel at night in the full moon, when all water is smooth as glass—and go when and where you please. Remember, that island is over 100 miles long, and has several thousand miles of shoreline, with deep inlets and bays entering the land for miles. All kinds of game, bear and deer, wolves, grouse, trout, etc. There are no big brown bear there, but plenty of black bear. You see, if you have even a small skiff you can get around by yourself by watching the wind. If you haven't, you're stuck in one place, or have to hire some boat to take you where you wish to go. Naturally, to do much, you'll need to get out away from around the Post-Office village.

5. Of course, you're figuring on a pretty slim margin of cash, but it can be done, and maybe you could get a job around here to help out, if necessary. You'll have a dandy time in any case, and I venture to predict that if you're the outdoor sort, you'll not go back to the States, at least not for some years. You mustn't expect to stumble upon a fortune the minute you hit the timber. You might never find a cropping worth working, but again you might hit a free gold lode the first week that would put you easy for life. It's here, if you can find it. There is a better chance up here to earn good money than in the States, if you use your head. You can "hand-troll" for red salmon and make enough to buy a $1000 gas boat the first season; and gas trollers make $25—$50—$150—and even up to $300 in a day when they hit the fish right. A green hand can make $10 a day for every fishing day.

There are other chances here, too. If you come, look me up and I can give you some valuable hints on how to use such cash as you may have, and tell you better than via correspondence. In general, if you hit town here with $150 or $200, you'll have enough to see you through in good shape for two or three months. It costs only around $15 per man per month, for staples of food, as you piece out with fish and game as much as you care to eat. Plenty of trout and grouse and ducks that you can get any old time, and if you can hunt, the deer are there to get. Clams on the beaches with plenty of salt-water fish (cod, sea perch, halibut, etc.) for a change of diet. There are berries in big quantities everywhere you'll ever be, during June to October.

YOU won't need to spend anything except for flour, coffee, sugar, pork or bacon, baking-powder, butter, spuds, and such other articles as you feel you need, such as jam or syrup, etc. $10 worth of grub lasts a long time, and you'll be "living the life of Reilly," *anyway!*

I enclose leaflet giving hints on various matters. Also, note books mentioned—Wilson's Laws and West's "Guide." Send for free bulletin No. 722 on Alaskan Mining and Mines, to the Director of the U. S. Geological Survey, Washington, D. C. You'll need a chart of the part of the Island you wish to visit, and that can be obtained here in town for 75c.

There is little or no placer around here. Formation is not conducive to such deposits, except in small residuals close to the vein producing the gold. Should I not see you here, I'd suggest as a starter, that you hit for Cholmondeley Sound—get passage on the Rough Rider motor-boat, or the Taku 2, and then move in your skiff or rowboat in good weather up into the sound and go back in as far as you can before camping. Beachcomb lumber or logs to make a floor for your tent and get it up off the ground. You may find an old log shack on the beach, in which case you may move right in after seeing that the roof is tight. Prospect the streams for float, and follow such *up-hill*, or up-stream, till reaching the ledge or vein. There are copper and lead deposits also in that country. There is a rich platinum mine near Cholmondeley Sd., called the Salt Chuck Mine.

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Old Songs That Men Have Sung

Devoted to outdoor songs, preferably hitherto unprinted—songs of the sea, the lumber-camps, Great Lakes, the West, old canal days, the negro, mountains, the pioneers, etc. Send in what you have or find, so that all may share in them.

Although conducted primarily for the collection and preservation of old songs, the editor will give information about modern ones when he can do so and *IF* all requests are accompanied with self-addressed envelop and reply postage (*NOT* attached). Write to Mr. Gordon direct, *NOT* to the magazine.

Conducted by R. W. GORDON, 4 Conant Hall, Cambridge, Mass.

FOR years "The Rowan County Crew," the story of a famous Kentucky feud, has been preserved solely in the memory of the people. Once or twice the existence of this song has been mentioned by collectors, and in 1925 a somewhat fragmentary text appeared in Cox's, "Folk-Songs of the South," pp. 203-4. But so far as I am aware this is the first time that a complete version has been printed.

I have two texts, each fairly complete, which differ but slightly. One of these was sent me by Mr. Overton C. Crooke, of Modesto, California, and the other by a correspondent in Williamson, West Virginia. The version printed below is that of Mr. Crooke with one addition (enclosed in parentheses) from the West Virginia version.

Mr. Crooke says in part: "The following ballad, which describes one of the worst feuds that ever took place in the mountains of Kentucky, is said to have been written by a blind man named Johnnie Day, who lived in Morehead, Kentucky. It describes the opening events of the Martin-Tolliver feud which earned for Rowan County the name of 'Bloody Rowan.' This ballad is sung throughout the mountains of Eastern Kentucky, but so far as I know it has never been set to music. I reproduce it entirely from memory as it was sung to me about thirty-five years ago by an itinerant sorghum maker in Madison County, Kentucky."

The Rowan County Crew

Come, all young men and ladies,
And mothers and fathers too,
And I'll relate to you the history
Of the Rowan County Crew.
Concerning Bloody Rowan
And her many hideous deeds,
My friends, please give attention,
Remember how it reads.

It was in the month of August,
All on election day,
John Martin he was wounded;
They say by Johnnie Day.
Martin did not believe it;
He did not think it so;
He thought it was Floyd Tolliver
That struck the terrible blow.

Martin did recover;
Some months had come and passed;
And in the town of Morehead
Those men had met at last.
Tolliver and a friend or two
About the streets did walk;
He seemed to be uneasy,
With no one wished to talk.

They went into Judge Carey's grocery
And stepped up to the bar,
But little did he think, dear friends,
He'd met that dreadful hour.
The thing of death was near him;
Martin rushed in at the door;
A few words passed between them
Concerning the row before.

The people all were frightened
And began to rush out of the room;
A ball from Martin's pistol
Laid Tolliver in the tomb.
His friends then gathered round him,
His wife to weep and wail;
Martin was arrested
And soon confined in jail.

He was put in the jail of Rowan,
There to remain a while
In the hands of law and justice
To bravely stand his trial.
The people talk of lynching him,
At present tho they fail;
The prisoner's friends then moved him
To the Winchester jail.

Some persons they forged an order,
Their names I do not know,
The plan was soon agreed upon,
For Martin they did go.
Martin was discouraged
He seemed to be in dread;
"They've sought a plan to kill me,"
To the jailor Martin said.

They put the handcuffs on him,
His heart was in distress;
They hurried him to the station,
Stepped on the night express.
Along the line she lumbers
At her usual rate of speed;
There were only two in numbers
To commit this dreadful deed.

Martin was in the smoking car
Accompanied by his wife;
They did not want her present
When they took her husband's life.

When they reached the town of Parsons
They had no time to lose;
A band approached the engineer
And bade him not to move.
They stepped up to the prisoner
With pistols in their hands;
In death he soon was sinking—
He died in iron bands.

The death of these two men has caused
Great trouble in our land,
Caused men to leave their families
And take the parting hand.

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Retaliating, still at war,
They may never, never cease;
I only wish that I could see
Our land once more in peace!

They killed the deputy sheriff,
Baumgartner was his name;
They shot him from the bushes
After taking deliberate aim.
His death it was a dreadful one,
It may never be forgot;
His body was torn and riddled
With thirty-three buckshot.

(They shot and killed Sol Bradley,
A sober, innocent man,
And left his wife and children
To do the best they can.)
They wounded young Ad Sizemore
Although his life we save;
He seems to shun the grog shop
Since he stood so near the grave.

I compose this as a warning:
Beware to you, young men!
Your pistols will cause you trouble,
On this you may depend.
In the bottom of the whisky glass
The lurking devils dwell;
It burns the breast of those who drink it
And sends their souls to Hell!

ALTHOUGH this text as printed seems to be fairly complete, it differs no doubt from other texts that some of you may remember. I'd be glad to have a note of these differences, as well as any information that any of you can give as to the authorship. In an article by W. A. Bradley appears a reference to "the blind Day Brothers" as the authors. Who were they, and did they compose other songs?

It's possible, too, that some of you may have or know of early printed texts of this song—"broadsides" as they were sometimes called—that were sold on the streets and at fairs. I'd like very much to obtain one of these in case they ever existed.

SEND all contributions of old songs, and all questions concerning them, direct to R. W. GORDON, 4 Conant Hall, Cambridge, Massachusetts. DO NOT send them to the magazine.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

AUGUST 30TH ISSUE

Besides the **two complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

THE HELMSMAN OF THE *MANDARIN* — ***Bill Adams***
Young *John Williams* was a flying-fish sailor.

DAYS OF '49 A Six-Part Story Part III — ***Gordon Young***
"I now know. He *is* the man."

HOW T'HUK BROKE HIS NECK — ***William Byron Mowery***
The blond invaders were giants.

DOCTOR SAM McCHESNEY — ***E. S. Pladwell***
The western bandit picked the wrong man.

SWALLOW TAIL — ***F. St. Mars***
He roosted where lions slept.

A RECRUIT WITH WALKER An Article
As told to J. D. Sweeney by Alfred De Shields
The last great filibustering expedition.

BIG 'UN — ***Bruce Johns***
Old Man Tibby was half Indian and half crazy.

STILL FARTHER AHEAD

THE THREE ISSUES following the next will contain *long* stories by H. Bedford-Jones, Bruce Johns, Harold Lamb, John Webb, Robert Simpson, Walter J. Coburn, Wm. Byron Mowery, L. Patrick Greene and Romaine H. Lowdermilk; short stories by Captain Dingle, David Thibault, Alex. McLaren, Frederick J. Jackson, J. H. Greene, Theodore Seixas Solomons, Raymond S. Spears, H. S. Cooper, Claude Farrere, Charles Victor Fischer, L. Paul, Ralph R. Perry, John Murray Reynolds and Wilkeson O'Connell; stories of mounted police in Canada, Don Cossacks on the steppes, hardcase skippers on the high seas; pearl traders on the Pacific, native commissioners in Africa, treasure hunters in Chinese islands, fishermen off the Grand Banks, revolutionists in Central America, fur pirates off Alaska, daring men in dangerous places up and down the earth.

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